

CLONINGER, PAUL CODY, M.A. Gender, Exile and Identity in Medieval English Literature from the Wife's Lament to the Book of Margery Kempe. (2017)
Directed by Dr. Amy Vines. 79 pp.

The theme of exile in literature is used to describe several states in which an individual is either cast out of or voluntarily leaves his or her community. Rather than exile being applied in a consistent and uniform manner, it operates with varying degrees, on multiple levels and with difference related to the gender of the individual. To explore how gender influences exile, I examined five Medieval personalities that exhibited exile in at least one of its forms. These exiles, two men (The Wanderer and Sir Orfeo) and three women (The Wife from the Wife's Lament, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe), are placed into comparison with one another to examine in what ways gender plays a role in the experiences and psychological changes that exiles go through. The examination showed that while gender does play a cursory role in the experience of exile in that it determines where the exile will be sent, it is the placement itself that seems to be the most crucial component in creating the conditions that ultimately lead to the differing results for each of the five individuals. By understanding that it is the place of exile rather than the gender of the exiled person that has the greatest influence on the experience allows us to see exile in a new manner, a manner that is not contingent on the gendered normative that has previously been used as a baseline of comparison. This opens the exploration of exile along a path that breaks with the tradition of examining it in terms of the historical male/female binary and allows us to see the effects in a more individualized and unique.

GENDER, EXILE AND IDENTITY IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH
LITERATURE FROM THE WIFE'S LAMENT TO
THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE

by

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Greensboro
2017

Approved by

Committee Chair

To Beau-Jacques Handy, whose patience, belief, and support gave me the time and the courage to complete this thesis, even when I felt that it was a task that would never be finished, and I was on the verge of giving up.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis, written by Paul Cody Cloninger, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Exile as a theme has been present in literature from early Greek writings through the ensuing centuries to contemporary modern literature. The leper, the outcast, the pariah, all are examples of and variations on the basic identity of the exile and all possess some if not every trait that can be used to define and identify the exile in literature; the figure of the exile exerts an agency within the tales or situations in which it is placed. The greater portion of the individuals discussed as exiles in premodern literature have been men; however, women do appear as subjects of exile in some tales. By focusing on the exile of women in literature, and more specifically medieval Romance literature, I hope to examine exile as a thematic tool and how its use varies from male and female subjects of exile. In what ways, if any, does exile operate similarly with males and females, and if it does differ, why is it important?

Through this examination, I hope to prove that there is an authority inherent in the condition of being the subject of exile, that through the very act of exiling an individual and ostensibly removing him/her from the community to remove his/her presumed negative influence, in fact the opposite effect is achieved. Not only is the exile transplanted to another location where their influence may be more welcomed and flourish, but their absence from their community of origin exerts an effect on their former compatriots and that their absence is not ever complete. The Oxford English Dictionary

defines exile as: “Enforced removal from one's native land according to an edict or sentence; penal expatriation or banishment; the state or condition of penal banishment; enforced residence in some foreign land. Expatriation, prolonged absence from one's native land, endured by compulsion of circumstances or voluntarily undergone for any purpose. trans. To compel (a person) by a decree or enactment to leave his country; to banish, expatriate” (<http://www.oed.com/>). While in most cases the identity of exile is one that is assigned to a person against his will or in opposition to what he might desire to be the case, it is important to note that exile is not necessarily always an action that is taken against an individual but rather it can be a condition or situation that a person willingly adopts for various and diverse reasons in the furtherance of a desire to achieve some psychological or spiritual insight or to break free of the constraints of societal rules. It is the comparison of these two modes of achieving the identity of exile, imposed upon and sought out, that creates the unique intersections that will demonstrate the way the exile identity not only manifested itself differently for men and women, but the ways in which, despite these differences, the men and women could achieve the same goals.

In the Classical period, the formalized structure of exile was developed under the Roman Empire as a method of removing a negative influence from the community without the emotional burden of having to put them to death; however, in a broader sense the concept of exile finds its root in several earlier forms of punishment, all of which contribute to the later structure that we recognize in present day as “exile.” Ostracism, banishment, expulsion and outlawry all contribute to the construction of what we recognize today as “exile.”

In his *Anatomy of Exile*, Paul Tabori finds the earliest historical example of exile in the flight of the Egyptian Sinuhe about 2000 B.C. Hearing that he is to be seized by authorities Sinuhe flees the kingdom and spends his life among aliens, returning only as an old man who seeks Pharaoh's mercy. (Edwards)

The invention of ostracism is credited to Cleisthenes, a Greek nobleman who helped reform the Athenian government around 508-507 B.C. Ostracism was a Greek mode of punishment where the citizenry could vote to force an individual who was believed to threaten the stability of the state to leave the country for a period of ten years without being found guilty of a criminal offense and without loss of position or property that they may have owned. Where exile and ostracism might seem like harsh punishments to a modern audience, a declaration of outlawry was perhaps an even harsher punishment to a person in a society where a sense of belonging to a specific group or community would be directly tied to their sense of identity. Forcing an individual to become an outlaw generally arose from cases of treason, rebellion, or other serious charges and quite literally placed a person outside of the protections of the law. Essentially the ostracized became a non-person with no legal recourses for actions taken against them as they inhabited a space that was "outside" of the protections afforded to other members of the society. Banishment carries a definition similar to what we now think of as exile, "1. orig. To put to the ban, 'proclaim' as an outlaw, to outlaw. 2. To condemn (a person) by public edict or sentence to leave the country; to exile, expatriate, 3. To send or drive away, expel, dismiss imperatively (a person)" (<http://www.oed.com/>). Thus, banishment becomes a blended term encompassing elements of exile, ostracism and outlawry and while exile will eventually emerge as the standard bearer for this group of definitions, it

is important to recognize the multi-faceted and nuanced terms that have joined to create the term we now call exile. “The eidetic structure of exile is an uprooting from native soil and translation from the center to the periphery, from organized space invested with meaning to a boundary where the conditions of experience are problematic” (Edwards 17). It is this stripping away of the comforts and securities that societies afforded their members, this very loss of identity through belonging that becomes the true cost to the exiled or ostracized and this (sometimes) forced transition through and inhabitation of a space outside the conventional, structural control of society that becomes a dangerous place, a liminal space, a space of chaos and transformation.

By the Middle Ages, the concept of exile had evolved to encompass ideas much broader than the strictly penal interpretation it originally had. The idea that more was lost than just the physical trappings of a society began to infiltrate the general understanding of the loss that is at the heart of an exile. Circulated in the Middle Ages was a text from the Roman writer Publius Syrus where he writes “*Exilum patitur patriae quise denegat*” (Ribbick). This translates strictly as “Which refuses to allow exile,” however, some scholars have translated it as “He suffers exile who denies himself to his country. (#1)” An alternate rendering . . . brings the public and private dimensions of exile into heightened relief: “He suffers exile from his homeland who denies himself (#2)” (Edwards 15). This interplay of translations gives a broader scope to the term exile. Translation number one speaks to the self-withdrawal from a community by the individual. It is the exile who exercises agency to willfully and purposefully removes himself from his country/community. In an interesting twist on this theme, translation #2

moves the scope of withdrawal to an even deeper and more personal level. In this translation, the exile is denying himself, his own identity, and in doing so causes himself to be removed from his community. The difference is subtle but profound. While in the first translation the exile has presumably removed himself physically from interaction with his homeland but is not necessarily denying himself, his identity, or his own sense of self, the second translation implies a psychological shift whereby the person is renouncing himself and although he may indeed have absented himself physically from his homeland that does not seem to be necessary for the purpose of this reading. Extending the analysis of the second translation further, it would be possible for a person to still be actively participating in the day to day happenings of his community, to be physically present in his homeland and yet by self-denial or being untrue to his own nature to have absented himself from fully participating in his own life in a meaningful manner or in a manner that would be considered the societal normative. To recap, the term exile possesses a far broader set of definitions than is apparent at first glance. For the purposes of this paper we must apply the term exile in its myriad forms: 1) Exile as a formal, sometimes political removal against one's will from one's homeland, 2) as a condition of removing oneself willfully from actual physical proximity to your homeland, and 3) a psychological condition of self-denial where one may or may not still reside within one's homeland but regardless of the physical locality is in the process of distancing himself from his true or former self and thus is not participating in society in an authentic or standard manner. In some cases, only one of the definitions will apply, while in others, combinations of the differing definitions may be applicable.

Understanding this layered application of exile as a condition that is simultaneously physical and psychological will be key to the analysis of the works examined here and to seeing them as more than just a singular example of exile but rather a faceted condition that operates on multiple levels.

Another point to note about exile in the Middle Ages and before is that it was generally a man's punishment and not universally applied to women. In ancient Greece, "An offender had to have sufficient means to travel to a suitable place for exile. Exile was especially difficult for a woman alone. Women could not travel safely without male escort or find a place in the social structures of other city-states" (Tetlow 94). Thus, exile was a difficult punishment to issue to a woman. At the very least it was a difficult and unusual punishment to be placed upon a woman who might be expected to go into exile alone and without the accompaniment of her spouse or family, if she had either. The difficulty of a government or ruling authority to condemn a woman to exile only heightens the stakes of an occasion where a woman might choose to voluntarily enter exile of her own accord. Indeed, the societal pressures and judgment might be even greater on a woman who chose this condition voluntarily as opposed to one who had it forced upon her by her king or government. While a woman who had the sentence of exile foisted upon her might receive some sympathy from her constituents and neighbors, a woman who voluntarily sought out this status of outsider and outcast might receive disapproval and scorn from those who would normally have viewed her in a less judgmental and more compassionate manner. This societal response informs the risk involved of voluntarily entering this level of negative identity. What might be gained to

offset the unfavorable and perhaps even dangerous responses that being the subject of exile would bring upon a person?

To further complicate the psychological implications of exile, we must also acknowledge the spiritual and religious history that exile possesses. In the Bible, the concept of exile is introduced in the third chapter of Genesis when Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden as punishment for the sin of disobeying God and eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the King James Version of the Bible Genesis 3:23-24 says,

²³Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. ²⁴So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (K. Bible)

The New International Version of the Bible translates these verses with a slight difference, saying,

²³So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (N. Bible)

So, from a Christian text perspective Adam and Eve are the original exiles, cast out from their homeland of Eden and forced to sojourn in the harsher and less hospitable realms of the earth. By this interpretation, all succeeding generations of Adam and Eve's descendants are being born and living in exile. This notion of "Christians as exiles" is an idea present in the work The City of God by St. Augustine, one of the founding fathers of

the church. “For Augustine, the notion of exile does not begin with the fall of Rome, but with the fall of Adam into sinful rebellion against God. It was the fall that essentially separated all of humanity into two groups—those who are citizens of the earthly city and those who are part of the city of God. As Brown writes: Since the Fall of Adam, humanity had always been divided into two great ‘cities,’ civitates; that is, into two great pyramids of loyalty. The one ‘city’ served God along with His loyal angels; the other served the rebel angels, the Devil and his demons. In his famous work, the *Enchiridion*, Augustine explicitly refers to Adam, following the fall, as an exile” (Smither). This work by St. Augustine written in the late fifth century was a very influential text in the early Church and became one of the cornerstones of the theology that emerged as the Church developed and would certainly have been known and read by Christians in the middle ages.

To make the leap from actual exile to literary exile (and more specifically the depiction of the exile of women in medieval writings), we must understand how the theme of exile in the Middle Ages makes the transition from the real world to the written page. To understand how literary exile functions, we must first look at the overall way exile manifests itself in literature of this period. How completely does it make the transition from fact to fantasy or from actuality to representation and how truly does it hold to its established definitions? Also, we must examine the work that each author is trying to accomplish with his or her writings, to look at the end goal of each depiction and see what cultural or philosophical statement is being made by the specific way that the concept of exile is being expressed. Is the depiction merely a literary device used

merely to provide a framework for the story, or does is exile functioning on a deeper level and being used to underpin a larger discussion of a sociological or spiritual nature. This understanding can be achieved by examining some of the tales that make up the greater portion of tales of exile and, as with physical exile, literary exile is peopled more often with tales of males than with females. That being the case, it is necessary to look at the normative way exile is handled in literature before proceeding on to the manifestations of exile that exist on the fringes and periphery of this normative majority. We must first look at how exile in literature manifests for men before we can proceed to discuss how it manifests for women. This baseline will allow us to compare the manners in which female exile mirrors the path of male exile as well as discovering the manners in which it differs. This analysis will show that while the structures of exile for men and women differed in the Middle Ages with the men being exiled in a traditional trajectory of being sent out and away, the women were exiled in a manner that constrained and enclosed them. This variance of trajectory and freedom affected the focus of the writings of each gender. Due to the unfettering their exile represented, the males turn their scope of vision outward and in a broader societal manner. The women however, due to the constricting of their mobility and vision, turned their focus inwardly and examined life in a more personal and intimate manner. This divergence of focus, however, does not result in the male and female writers arriving at different conclusions. Instead, despite the opposing routes they take through the examinations of their states of being, they arrive at surprisingly similar points, allowing them to achieve a new awareness about their identities and how these new identities operate within society.

The tales of male exile I am using to establish the comparative baseline are the character of the Wanderer in the early Anglo-Saxon poem of the same name and Sir Orfeo from the medieval poem of *The Tale of Sir Orfeo*. The understanding from these two tales will be juxtaposed against the understanding of three female exiles: the Wife in the early Anglo-Saxon poem, *The Wife's Lament*; Julian of Norwich, famous medieval anchoress; and Margery Kempe, the medieval English mystic whose life is the focus of the first autobiography written in the English language. By utilizing these two sets of tales as points of comparison, I hope to demonstrate that exile, in its myriad forms, operates in the female examples as well as the male even though the form that the exile takes for the women often differs from the form it takes for the men. As a corollary, it can be noted that studies of this nature can be found in the social sciences where the experience of female refugees (exiles) is compared to the experience of male refugees to better understand the relationship that exists between gender and exile.

CHAPTER II

THE WANDERER AND THE WIFE'S LAMENT

“The Wanderer” is an Old English poem that details the circumstances and repercussions that have led the poem’s narrator to his current dismal state of exile. The poem survives as one of the pieces in the collection known as the Exeter Book. While this collection was written in the late tenth century, the exact date of the composition of *“The Wanderer”* cannot be determined from this as it is very likely that the poem was passed down orally before being committed to the written page. In this oral form “bards might have sung or recited it to crowds of warriors as they ate and drank, or gathered for other social occasions” (Team). Evidence of its origins in the oral tradition can be found in the structures and poetic devices such as alliteration and kennings, both of which would have served the scope in his remembrance and performance of the work.

It is accepted by most scholars that the poem was composed sometime around the fifth or sixth century. This was a transitional period for Anglo-Saxon England as it was simultaneously holding onto the vestiges of its pagan past even as it dealt with the growing presence of Christianity and the increasing conversion of the populace to this new religion. This duality is exhibited in the very language of the poem as “it contains traces of both traditional Germanic warrior culture and of a Christian value system. The speaker for much of the poem is a warrior who has had to go into exile after the slaughter of his lord and relatives in battle. Now, he contemplates what the experience of the exile

teaches him about life” (Team). While the bulk of the poem celebrates the warrior culture of early England and the comitatus relationship that was vitally important to it, the poem also contains traces of Christian imagery; imagery that brackets the warrior-centered descriptions that makes up the central part of the poem.

The opening stanza of *The Wanderer* finds the narrator setting the stage for the poem as he describes the current state of his life traversing the open waters:

Oft him anhaga are gebideð,
metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig
geond lagulade longe sceolde
hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ,
wadan wræclastas. Wyrð bið ful aræd! (1-5) (Krapp)¹

This stanza contains only twenty-six words but is packed full of imagery that not only definitively casts the narrator in the role of exile, but also touches on the emotional pain that this state forces him to bear, the constant motion that is characterized by this state, the unyielding pressure of *wyrð* (destiny or fate), as well as Christian allusions to *metudes* (or alternately *metodes*) defined as Measurer/God/Creator/Christ. In this stanza, we find that the narrator travels the cold sea alone, following the “tracks of exile” on which *metudes* has placed him. There is also a sense of inevitability in the narrator’s tone as he concludes the opening stanza with the phrase “Wyrð bið ful aræd!” (5) A more general translation of the phrase rather than the one provided in the footnote would be “Fate

¹“Often the lone-dweller awaits his own favor, /
the Measurer’s mercy, though he must, /
mind-caring, throughout the ocean’s way /
stir the rime-chilled sea with his hands /
for a long while, tread the tracks of exile— /
the way of the world is ever an open book” (1-5). (A. K. Hostetter)

never wavers” or “Things go on as they must do.” This sense of tacit acceptance of his situation indicates that the Wanderer has resigned himself to the fate that God has determined for him. This sentiment is echoed in the closing stanza of the poem:

Swa cwæð snottor on mode, gesæt him sundor æt rune.
 Til biþ se þe his treowe gehealdeþ, ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene
 beorn of his breostum acyþan, nemþe he ær þa bote cunne,
 eorl mid elne gefremman. Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
 frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð. (111-115)
 (Krapp)²

The closing stanza completes the bracketing of the poem with the Christian virtue of acceptance of God’s will and the destiny that God, in his wisdom, has laid out. This acceptance is juxtaposed against the warrior-culture imagery that fills the middle portion of the poem. In the main body of the poem, the narrator both mourns and extols the virtues of the warrior life he has been forced to leave behind, describing the love and joy he felt under the protection of his liege-lord, the subsequent loss of this lord and his retinue, his failed attempts at finding another lord to join, and finally his exile out on the lonely waters of the sea.

The central section of the poem also replicates the change that oft times accompanies a tale of exile and return, which is initiated by the exile’s travels through the transitional and liminal spaces that occupy the areas outside the traditional boundaries of the exile’s previous life and existence. This trajectory of “out and back” or “into and out

² So spoke the wise man in his mind, as he sat apart in secret consultation... /
 A good man who keeps his troth ought to never make known /
 his miseries too quickly from his breast, unless he knows beforehand, /
 an earl practicing his courage. It will be well for him who seeks the favor, /
 the comfort from our father in heaven, where a fortress stands for us all. (111-115) (A. K. Hostetter)

of” these spaces signals a change in the exile that becomes significant to the tale or to the moral lesson that needs to be learned. It is here that the narrator transitions from lamenting the loss of his life in the warrior-culture to providing the wisdom of his experiences to the listener as an educational offering. This movement from being strictly an elegy (or lament) to being a wisdom poem is a result of the changes that have come over the Wanderer in his period of exile, highlighting the fact that exile is a transformative experience. This brings to light another aspect of exile: it is not a static condition. It is a condition of movement and change that is predicated on the lessons that the exiled learns because of the circumstances he is forced to undergo. The Wanderer explains that anyone who has experienced exile will understand what he has suffered, and as a corollary, the reverse can be inferred to be true, that one who has not had these experiences will not understand the level to which he has suffered:

Wat se þe cunnað
 hu slīpen bið
 sorg to geferan
 þam þe him lyt hafað
 leofra geholena:
 warað hine wræclast (29b-32a) (Miller)³

Perhaps, this is an indication of the value of exile as a teaching tool. If this is the case, could the Wanderer be advocating for the condition of exile as a form of enlightenment

³He who has tried it knows /
 how cruel is /
 sorrow as a companion /
 to the one who has few /
 beloved friends: /
 the path of exile holds him (29b-32a) (Miller)

and education? Might the tale of the Wanderer be used to make the case to willingly enter the state of exile as a means of self-improvement, or to achieve a greater understanding of the world and man's relationship to it and its Creator? I believe the answer to both questions is an unequivocal "yes." In casting the condition of exile as desirable, the Wanderer begins the process of evolution that will move it from a loathed position on the outskirts of society to a spiritually elevated position that has traversed a transformative space beyond the mundane world and moved closer to the spiritual center represented by God, culminating in the elevation of the ascetic lifestyle in ensuing centuries.

The Wife's Lament is an Old English poem and, like *The Wanderer*, it is also found in The Exeter Book. The poem, also written in the elegiac style, is one of the first instances that we find an Old English poem that is spoken by a female protagonist. Scholars believe that *The Wife's Lament*, also sometimes referred to as *The Wife's Complaint*, was composed in the tenth century and while this places it approximately four hundred years after the Wanderer and making them not truly contemporaneous with one another, there still exists between the two poems enough stylistic and subject matter similarities that they can be used as points of comparison with one another. *The Wife's Lament* is more often compared to another tale that appears in The Exeter Book, *Wulf and Eadwacer*. In fact, the two works appear side by side in the source text. While *Wulf and Eadwacer* also features the theme of a woman's longing for her lost love, the fact that the Wife is the victim of a forced exile and undergoes a psychological examination of herself

and her current state of being brings her tale into conjunction with the Wanderer and makes *The Wife's Lament* the perfect counterpoint to compare with the male text.

Like *The Wanderer*, *The Wife's Lament* begins with a statement that sets the stage for the narrator's life, a life of loneliness and isolation. She says,

Ic þis giedd wrece bi me ful geomorre,
minre sylfre sið. Ic þæt secgan mæg,
hwæt ic yrmþa gebad, siþþan ic up weox,
niwes oþþe ealdes, no ma þonne nu (1-4) (Klink)⁴

The wife says that she “utters” her song of mournfulness. This word choice seems to call attention to the isolation of the speaker. This term does not bespeak of a person shouting at another or crying out with any vigor, but a person who is resigned, introspective and alone. Indeed, this is exactly what we learn about the speaker as she progresses through her lament, that she has been not only abandoned, but forced to leave her community and reside in an earth-cave far from her former society. In the next line of the poem she even refers to herself as an exile, a *wræcsipa*. The narrator describes the level of her suffering to be “no ma þonne nu. (4)” This translates roughly as “no more than now” or as “none greater than now.” Her current condition causes her to suffer more than at any other time in her life; this exile is the worst thing to ever happen to her. This sentiment hearkens back to the ideas discussed in the introduction where it is shown that the sense of belonging and identity was intimately connected with one's physical placement. Being

⁴ I utter this song about me fully mournful /
my self's journey I may tell that, /
what misery I experienced, since I grew up, /
recently or long ago, no more than now; (1-4) (Vines)

bereft of this would throw one's whole world and identity into chaos and confusion, denying a person the sense of safety and stability that was paramount in the uncertain times in which the Anglo-Saxons lived.

Progression through the poem reveals more similarities to *The Wanderer* as line 6 of *The Wife's Lament* says, "ærest min hlaford gewat: heonan of leodum ofer yþa gelac. (6-7a)" (Klink)⁵ Her lord has abandoned her and has fled across the waters. The Wanderer was likewise abandoned (albeit through death) and found himself adrift on the waters and like the warrior floating on the water in a place of uncertainty, the wife has had the central figure of her life left away, leaving her feeling unmoored and without purpose. Because of this feeling of abandonment, the wife goes in search of her lord's people to "seek service" and a place to belong. This parallels lines 23-28 of *The Wanderer*, where the narrator bemoans the fact that despite his attempts to locate another lord and retinue to join, he is unsuccessful.⁶ The pain of this separation is highlighted even further in both poems as the Wife says of her separation and isolation, "that we two, widest apart in the worldly realm, should live most hatefully, it sorrowed me" (A. K. Hostetter). This hearkens back to the Wanderer's words that "The experienced one knows how cruel sorrow is as his companion, who has few beloved protectors" (A. K. Hostetter). Both speakers reaffirm the sorrow that their state of exile has caused them

⁵ "First my lord left: hence from the people / over the rolling of the waves (6-7a)" (Vines)

⁶ "and went forth from there abjected / winter-anxious over the binding waves, / hall-wretched, seeking a dispenser of treasure, / where I, far or near, could find him who / in the mead-hall might know of my kind, / or who wishes to comfort a friendless me(23a-28)" (A. K. Hostetter)

and at this point of the poems still exhibit a parallel experience to one another and to the forces that have placed them unwittingly in these painful situations.

Moving further into the poems, death becomes a powerful force in the lives of both the Wanderer and the Wife. The Wanderer is in his current state because death has claimed the life of his lord and friends and now he is adrift on the seas of uncertainty. While death has not claimed the life of the Wife's husband (at least, not that we are aware of), it is interesting to note that the Wife has said, "nemne deað ana owiht elles; eft is þæt onhworfen, is nu swa hit no wære, (22a-24)" (Klink)⁷ and yet the two have been separated. The Wanderer has buried his lord in the earth and the Wife has been exiled to live in a cave beneath the earth. Can it be inferred here that she is dead to her husband and her exile to this earth cave approximates a representation of burial? If this is the case, then it casts the current state of the Wife in an entirely different light. Rather than the separation of her from her lord being the result of the machinations of his relatives, it becomes a more complete separation where the husband has left the wife and commanded her to reside beneath the earth. The lord has ordered the wife to a place that approximates a grave and his connection to her is like that of a widower to his deceased spouse. She is living in a valley of death and when she describes her location as "Eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad, sindon dena dimme, duna uphea, bitre burgtunas, brerum beweaxne (29-31)" (Klink),⁸ she makes her complete isolation even more

⁷ "full often we two vowed /
that we would never part except for death alone (21b-22)" (Vines).

⁸ "Old is this earth-hall. I am oppressed with deep longing /
The valleys are dark, the mountains are steep /
The fortified towns bitter overgrown with briars (29-31)" (Vines).

apparent. She is exiled but also confined, not only by the earth-cave in which she resides but also by the landscape that surrounds her. This redundancy of inaccessibility makes her simultaneously double exiled and doubly confined.

This confined exile sits in stark contrast to the exile of the Wanderer who has been set loose upon the open waters. As was noted in the introduction, exile in its truest form of casting out of or untethering of a person from the confines of his society and community was not a state that was often applied to women, and that distinction seems to be at play in this poem. The Wife has been confined and enclosed, rather than cast out and ostensibly “set free” to wander the world unsupervised and uncontrolled. From a physical standpoint, the Wanderer and the Wife are experiencing exile from two vastly different points of view. Where one moves (perhaps) rudderless across the icy surface of the fluid ocean, the other is grounded in a single place, indeed more than grounded as she truly lives beneath the earth. Another difference in the physical attributes of their exile locations would be the scope of their view. Though it is not explicitly stated, one can presume that being adrift on the open ocean gives the Wanderer an unobstructed and seemingly limitless view of the world around him. Conversely, not only is the Wife living in a cave in the earth, the cave is in a forest in the bottom of a valley and surrounded by mountains on all sides.

The importance of the distinction between the physical experiences of these two exiles lies in the way this physical restriction or freedom manifests in the psychological reflection that the exiles pursue as they attempt to understand the circumstances that have brought them to this place. In what ways do the differing levels of constraint and

freedom while in exile inform the way the two exiles psychologically process their experiences? The exile experiences of the Wife and the Wanderer follow different paths and the two exiles eventually reach distinct understandings of their states. This difference, rather than being directly a function of the gender of the exile, seems to be seated in the type of exile being experienced. However, it must be noted that gender is the catalyst for the placement in their specific locations of exile. It is the gender of the exile that executes agency with regards to the location to which each will be relegated, neither the Wife nor the Wanderer have choice in this placement.

The Wanderer's exile with its open waters and expansive horizon leads him to focus his speculation about life in an outward manner. He begins the poem by discussing himself and the circumstances that have brought him to this place of exile as well as the very personal way this exile has affected him. When he says, "Wat se þe cunnað hu sliþen sorg to geferan þam þe him lyt hafað - leofra geholena: - warað hine wræclast,(29b-31)" (Krapp)⁹ the Wanderer is lamenting that his exile has made sorrow his companion and that he has few friends. The voice in this section of the poem is focused on how exile has impacted the Wanderer on a personal level and how that impact has manifested itself in changes to the status quo of his previous life, looking equally backwards at his past and looking forward contemplatively about his future. One might argue that, as an elegy, the appearance of this voice in the poem is an oddity, but instead, I believe that it would be odd for this type of speech to not be present and unusual for the

⁹ "He who has tried it knows /
how cruel is sorrow as a companion /
to the one who has few beloved friends: /
the path of exile (wræclast) holds him (29b-31)" (Miller)

speaker to approach the subject of the elegy and exile without doing so from a pointed and personal point of view. The voice of the Wanderer changes on lines 66-70 when he says, “Wita sceal geþyldig, ne sceal no to hatheort ne to hrædwyrde, ne to wac wiga, ne to wanhydig, ne to forht ne to fægen, ne to feohgifre, ne næfre gielpes to georn, ær he geare cunne (66a-70)” (Krapp).¹⁰ In this passage the Wanderer ruminates on the qualities that make up a wise and good man. He offers up a running list of things that a wise man must never do and in this process, shifts his focus from an internal to an external one. The Wanderer continues this line of reasoning with a premonitory warning that the wise man must realize “hu gæstlic bið, þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð (73b-74)” (Krapp).¹¹ The Wanderer realizes that the world that he longed for at the beginning of the poem cannot stand, that the kings and kingdoms will fall and all the things that they have built, believing them to be permanent, will stand in ruin, laid waste by “ælda scyppend. (85b)”¹² This returning nod to the Christian God is bracketed by another section in which the Wanderer invokes the memory of his warrior past. Yet, even though he briefly returns to his non-Christian thought patterns, the Wanderer does not return to his lamentations of self, but rather for the larger entity of the warrior culture that is failing and destined to fall. After this brief lapse back into his previous mode of thinking, the poem ends with the very Christian sentiment of, “Wel bið þam þe him are seceð, frofre to

¹⁰ “He must never be too impulsive, nor too hasty of speech, / nor too weak a warrior, nor too reckless, / nor too fearful, nor too cheerful, / nor too greedy for goods, nor ever too eager for boasts, / before he sees clearly. (66a-70)” (Miller)

¹¹ “how terrible it will be, when all the wealth of this world lies waste, (73b-74)” (Miller)

¹² The Creator of Men (God)

Fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð (114b-115)” (Krapp).¹³ This “undoubted and accepted Christian consolation at the end of the poem” (Cross 515) evokes the sentiment of God and a heavenly afterlife and moves the scope of the poem’s vision from the worldly to the divine. J. E. Cross noted that “No pagan could have stated such a clear acceptance of the next life in the terms of the last two lines” (Cross 515). With this shift to a more Christian outlook, the Wanderer’s vision has moved from one focused strictly on himself and his own pain and suffering to one that seeks to educate people on the ways in which they may become better, wiser men and how they must ultimately put themselves in the hands of God and his mercy if they want to attain the heavenly paradise. The transition of his vision results from the Wanderer’s forced gaze out into the expansive nothingness that surrounds him. Perhaps in eliminating the barriers to his movement and vision, his exile has enabled him to move beyond himself to a higher psychological understanding of the world he inhabited.

In contrast to the Wanderer’s free and unfettered exile, the Wife’s experience of exile finds her in a place of constraint within constraint, a veritable Russian doll of isolating layers that remove her farther and farther from the society that has cast her out. As was shown earlier in this analysis, the wife’s exile places her in an earth-cave, that sits in a valley, surrounded by a forest and encircled by mountains. This restrictive line of sight causes the Wife’s contemplation to turn inward, to analyze her circumstance from an internal and personal level rather than an external and worldly one. When she says,

¹³ “It is better for the one that seeks mercy,
consolation from the father in the heavens,
where, for us, all permanence rests.” (A. K. Hostetter)

þonne ic on uhtan āna gonge 35
 under āctrēo geond þās eorðscrafu.
 þær ic sittan[5] mōt sumorlangne
 þær ic wēpan mæg mīne wræcsīþas,
 earfoþa fela; forþon ic æfre ne mæg
 þære mōdceare mīnre gerestan, 40
 ne ealles þæs longapes þe mec on þissum līfe begeat. (35-41)¹⁴ (Klink)

the Wife illustrates how she passes her days in solitude and how the loneliness is a central part of how she sees herself. This image becomes central to her ruminations as she explores her exile, turning inward and exploring the place that “self” occupies in her situation. I believe this inward focus is due to the circumscribed nature of her exile. Not only does she lack the visual escape or open feeling that a wider sight field and freedom of movement might afford her, but her “walling off” within the confines of her layered placement might psychologically force her mind to focus upon itself. This circumscribed mental state causes her to linger over her own situation for a greater period than the Wanderer. The Wife’s Lament is only fifty-three lines long, yet she spends forty-five of those lines discussing her own state.

There is a short section from lines 42-50 where the Wife turns her attention away from herself and speaks about a greater or higher understanding of self and society. In this section the Wife says,

¹⁴ “while I at dawn walk alone /
 under the oak treethroughout the earth-room. /
 There I must sit [through] the summer-long day /
 there I may weep my exile /
 many hardships for this reason I may never /
 the spirit-care (heartache) find rest from my, /
 nor all the longing that oppresses me in this life. (35-41)” (Vines)

A scyle geong mon wesan geomormod,
 heard heortan geþoht, swylce habban sceal
 bliþe gebæro, eac þon breostceare,
 sinsorgna gedreag (42-45a). (Klink)¹⁵

She gives instruction on how a young man should manage his emotions and how he should present himself to the world. This statement mirrors the instructions given by the Wanderer starting on line 65 and running through line 75. Where the two poems diverge on this subject is in the fact that the Wanderer continues to discuss the greater society from which he has been exiled and the Wife narrows her focus again to the subject of a single person, her lost lord saying, “Dreogeð se min wine, micle modceare; he gemon to oft wynlicran wic. Wa bið þam þe sceal of langoþe leofes abidan (50b-53)” (Klink).¹⁶ Rather than moving on to a higher contemplation of spirituality, the Wife tells us how her lost lord suffers in his exile as well and that all who are separated from their loves are woeful.

We must remember that the Wanderer transitions his thoughts from self to another singular warrior to the whole of his culture before finally arriving at his musings on God and the heavenly kingdom. With so many similarities between them, what causes the Wife and the Wanderer to diverge at this point? What points of difference exist within the structure of their tales that might lead to this outcome? One might postulate that

¹⁵ “A young man must always be sad at heart,
 hard in the thoughts inside, also he must keep
 a happy bearing, but also breast-cares,
 suffering never-ending grief—(42-45a)” (A. K. Hostetter)

¹⁶ “My companion suffers a great mind-affliction—
 he remembers too often his joyful home.
 Woe be to that one who must
 wait for their beloved with longing.(50b-53)” (A. K. Hostetter)

gender is the primary factor that differentiates these two exilic figures; that the experiences and ways that the minds of the two different sexes work might be the reason that they diverge, but I don't think this is a satisfactory explanation. There are too many other parallels to the way their stories unfold and the ways they express their experiences for the role of gender to suddenly exert itself at this one point. It is true that their genders dictated the way they were exiled and the locations to which they were sent, but I believe it is the location itself and the properties of the location that hold that results in the divergence. It is the influence of place, of unfettering versus constraint that is manifesting in these tales to force the exiles to arrive at these two opposing places. Is this not a case where movement and restricted movement operate to initiate different psychological processes? This begs the question "What might be the result of a reversal of placement for these two individuals?" If reversing the gendered placement led the Wanderer to be constrained and the Wife unfettered, would their exilic experiences be altered along with their locations? It is my belief that they would indeed change, but as gender is the placing agent and the impetus behind their current experience, it must be considered as essential to the creation of their psychological journey and eventual conclusions.

CHAPTER III

SIR ORFEO AND JULIAN OF NORWICH

The second text used to establish the male baseline of exilic experiences is the Middle English Breton Lay, *Sir Orfeo*. This tale, based on the classical Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, is a variation of the original storyline with several significant changes that affect the educational value and moral lesson of the tale. The tale of *Sir Orfeo* first appears in an anthology known as the Auchinleck manuscript that dates from around 1330-40. While the author of the tale is unknown and no immediate source for this version of the tale can be found, “the ultimate source of the poem is evidently the story of Orpheus and Eurydice as told by Virgil and Ovid, but so different is the romance from any known version of this story that, if the English minstrel had not called his hero and heroine Orfeo and Heurodys, his indebtedness to the ancients would be hard to prove” (Kittredge 176). In fact, since the prevailing literary trend of the time placed more emphasis on reimagining former texts than on producing texts of originality, it comes as no surprise to find this tale rooted within the structures of an earlier one. What does become interesting is the way the composer of the lay of *Sir Orfeo* can construct the tale in such a way that the original is apparent, but contemporary thematic conventions are interwoven to produce a tale of new complexity and beauty. Part of “the power of the Orpheus myth to resonate through time and within both classical and medieval literatures has led to a number of divergent interpretations of the lay of *Sir Orfeo*; it has been read

within Christian contexts, Celtic folklore contexts, as well as within historical, philosophical, psychological, intertextual, and poetic contexts” (Laskaya 16). Perhaps, the ability of this tale to be examined through such a wide range of filters explains the popularity it has enjoyed.

The tale of *Sir Orfeo* both parallels and diverges from its classical source text in several important ways; perhaps the most telling of which are situating the tale in Medieval England rather than its classical placement in Greece and making Sir Orfeo a king rather than a preternaturally gifted minstrel. The narrative of this poem follows Sir Orfeo losing his wife to abduction by a king from the Otherworld, Orfeo’s departure from his own kingdom and subsequent self-exile, his decade long wandering in the forest, his eventual journey to the Otherworld to reclaim his wife and finally his return to his kingdom to assume his rightful position as king. “The basic narrative of unassuaged grief and the image of Orpheus the magical or shamanistic harper originates in classical literature. Through medieval commentaries, Christian re-readings of the narrative became well-known: 1) Orpheus’s backward glance and his consequent loss of Eurydice becomes emblematic for sin and temptation; or 2) Orpheus becomes a Christ figure and the tale foretells redemption” (Laskaya 17). By intermingling the classical structure and the contemporary thematic devices of his time and creating a hybrid tale, the composer of *Sir Orfeo* has constructed a tale that blurs the lines between these Christian interpretations of the original myth and the interpretations that can be applied to the tale in its current form. Since the tale of Sir Orfeo is being set up in juxtaposition with Julian of Norwich, understanding the Christian intersections will be important in constructing a

more layered and multifaceted comparison. As a strictly Christian identity, it would be unusual to attempt to draw any meaningful comparison between Julian of Norwich and a pagan mythological tale, but the fact that the tale of Sir Orfeo was adapted by the early Medieval Christians as a story that could be used to discuss Christian values makes it a viable and logical choice.

For the purposes of analysis, this hybridization creates several important alterations, among them: Heurodis is not killed, but kidnapped by a fairy king; Orfeo does not go in search of her, rather he abandons his kingdom and sends himself into self-exile (an exile that lasts for ten years); Orfeo's rediscovery of his wife is accidental and leads him on a second transition to the *Otherworld*; and finally, Orfeo successfully recovers both his wife and his kingdom. It is the kidnapping of Heurodis that is the impetus that causes Sir Orfeo to cast himself into exile and leave his kingdom behind. After Heurodis has been seized by the fairy king, Orfeo calls together his barons, earls, and 'lordes of renouns' (202), and announces that he is forsaking his rule and kingdom and will enter the wilderness. It is important to notice that Orfeo does not say he hopes to recover Heurodis. Instead, he says,

For now, ichave me quen y-lore
The fairest kevedi tat ever was bore
Never eft y nil no woman se.
Into Wilderness ichilte
And live ther evermore. (209-13) (Laskaya)

Perhaps the story was so well known that further explanation was unnecessary. But the author goes to considerable trouble to make it clear that Orfeo willingly and irrevocably

gives up all his comforts as an act of love. He obviously does not expect any change in his fortune; that is, he does not expect to find Heurodis, for he tells his subjects:

. . . when ye vnder-stand pat y be spent,
 Make you pan a parlement,
 & chese you a newe king . . . (212-17) (Laskaya)

What we see depicted in this passage is not the image of a man about to embark on a knightly quest to recover his lady-love. There is not an anticipation of the out and back transition of a knightly quest where Orfeo will leave, rescue his wife and then return to glory and fanfare. His departure is depicted in the pure sense of exile as a banishment until death because Orfeo gives the instructions of how the new king is to be chosen upon news that he has died. Like *the Wanderer*, Sir Orfeo finds himself in a life that is bereft of the very things that made life worth living, in Orfeo's case, it is his wife and his overwhelming love for her that gives reason to his living and it is the loss of Heurodis that drives him to exile himself without the hope of return. The two male exiles discussed so far have both experienced loss on a societal level that causes them to have lost interest in their former communities. This lack of interest or loss of societal connections drives them out into the liminal spaces where they undergo transformation. It is also in this transitional "in-between" space that both tales begin to take a turn towards a more Christian interpretation, with the Wanderer philosophizing about trusting in the higher power of God and Orfeo becoming the Christian hermit who abandons civilization to spend his life in isolation.

Orfeo's exile also comes with the complete abandonment of his previous identity as king. Orfeo refuses to allow any of his retainers to accompany him and he also abandons the raiment that identified his station in life.

Bot a sclavin on him he toke.
 He no hadde kirtel no hode,
 Schert, ne no nother gode,
 Bot his harp he tok algate
 And dede him barfot out atte gate
 No man most with him go. (228-233) (Laskaya)

This touches on the psychological aspect of exile that was discussed in the introduction where the denial of self and identity can be construed as aspects of exile in its larger context. Orfeo goes forth into exile not as a king with his retinue and the clothing to indicate his status, but as a hermit or peasant, an image that operates as the antithesis to his former position as king. In this denial of self, Orfeo is making a complete break not only with his former home and position but also with the very identity of the man who inhabited that position. In a very real sense, the personage of Sir Orfeo ceases to exist and essentially becomes dead to those in his kingdom that he has left behind. Orfeo wanders in the wilderness in this state for 10 years. In his paper, *The Significance of Sir Orfeo's Exile*, Kenneth Gros Louis notes "that the ten years are a substitute for death is suggested by the increasing isolation of Orfeo after Heurodis disappears-an isolation which, ultimately, makes Orfeo seem like a dead thing even to the beasts who are charmed by his music" (Louis 247). This addresses the lack of identity and agency that Sir Orfeo has once he has exiled himself to the wood, but in very real sense, this loss of agency occurs much earlier in the tale because "when he first hears Heurodis's dream,

‘He asked conseyl at ich man, Ac no man him help no can’” (179-80). When she is taken by the fairies, he thinks his life is over-‘per was non amendement’ (200). When he leaves his kingdom, ‘No man most wip him go’ (233)” (Louis). This succession of events serves to alienate Orfeo further and further from his former identity and the level of agency he maintained as the king of his land. This separation happens in stages as we watch Orfeo separate more and more from his previous existence and move to the more fluid nature of an unfettered exile. There is a distinct emotional and psychological pressure that seems to be operating in this instance to move Orfeo away from his previous state and into the more uncertain state of the exile, and he appears unable to fight against this pressure. Louis notes that “the combination of his own decision to go into exile and the inability of his followers to solace or advise him pushes Orfeo, literally and figuratively, into life at its lowest level of existence, a life which approximates death” (Louis).¹⁷ This idea brings us back to one of the translations of “*Exilum patitur patriae quise denegat*” - which may be translated as “He suffers exile who denies himself to his country.” Orfeo is experiencing exile on two different levels, the physical level by physically absenting himself from his kingdom and the psychological level by absenting himself from his identity. In this duality, we see the expansion of exile as it moves from simply a construct of physical placement to a condition that operates simultaneously on the multiple levels of emotion, psychology and physicality. This is important because in the

¹⁷ There are, of course, many Celtic analogues for journeys into the wilderness in which there is no question of search. In these analogues, however, the grief-stricken lover or relative goes into the wilderness because he is nearly mad with grief. Orfeo certainly suffers when Heurodis is taken away, but his decision is also clearly a reasoned one (consider that he even calls together his barons to announce it). He does not, in other words, rush into the wilderness in a fit of emotional despair. (Louis)

analysis of Julian, it will be found that her exile is also a multilayered event, existing both on the purely physical level of earthly placement as well as the spiritual level of divine confluence that is characterized by a relationship with God that is both spiritual and personal. In addition to this, Julian also goes through a similar shedding of identity. It is important to recognize that exile at this point is becoming not a singularity but rather is evolving into conditions that occupies multiple states of being and various levels of psychological existence.

In another parallel to the Wanderer, Orfeo's exile is characterized by movement (albeit in stages) through the spaces outside of his normal world. As a king, Orfeo does not exile himself to another land to live as an outsider with other people, rather he chooses to live in the realm of the woods and wilderness where he is not merely an outsider, but he is also an alien. Yet even as an alien living in their midst, the animals for the most part are oblivious to Orfeo. The only notice the beasts of the wild give to Orfeo is when he plays his harp and yet even this notice is more centered on the music emanating from the harp than on the harper himself.

On certain days when the weather is clear and bright, Orfeo takes his harp from its hiding place in a hollow tree and attracts the 'wilde bestes' (273) and 'alle pe foules' (275) with its sounds. But, the music finished, 'No best bi him abide nold' (280); they come only to hear the harp-the harper, to them, means nothing. (Louis)

This highlights the loss of status for Orfeo. While he plays his harp, the animals gather about him as a sort of anti-court and in this time Orfeo's life approximates his life at court, however, as soon as the music stops they all leave him. The loyalty of the animals

is not the loyalty of the courtly retainers who have pledged fidelity to the personage and the position the king occupies, but the animals' devotion is to something intangible, the music that he produces. For this reason, it must be accepted that although the situation in the forest with the animals ostensibly could be considered a replacement for Orfeo's previous position, the level of loyalty and interaction between Orfeo and the beasts puts this relationship on a wholly different level and thus represents a transition of identity for Orfeo. In this new identity Orfeo has moved down the societal ladder and become as a servant, like the harpers and jesters that might have been familiar sights at his court.

Like the Wanderer floating aimlessly on the waters, Orfeo is caught up in a period of inaction. His death-like sojourn in the forest is marked by no real progress or evolution in his state. He has sunk into a pit of remorse and despair and makes no attempts to climb out of it. This all changes when Orfeo rediscovers his wife as she rides through the forest with a retinue of ladies from the fairy kingdom. Orfeo sees the ladies participating in the sport of falconry and when he approaches them to have a closer look he, "Biheld, and hath wle undernome, and seth bi al thing that it is his owen quen, Dam Heurodis (320-322)" (Laskaya). It is worth noting that this is not the first time Sir Orfeo has seen groups from the fairy kingdom riding through the forest. He has on previous occasions seen the fairy king and his warriors riding past, as well as seeing the royal court making music and merriment as they dance through the forest, but these did not inspire him to take any action. This may be due to the fact that "The other fairy groups which Orfeo had seen in the wilderness were engaged in purposeless activity, but in Heurodis's hunting party, 'Ich faucoun his pray slough' (313)" (Laskaya). Perhaps, it is

the “hunt” that reawakens Orfeo to thoughts of his previous life, because at the point he is attracted to and follows the lady falconers, he is not yet aware that his wife, Heurodis, is among them. Once he sees his wife, Orfeo undergoes another change as he says, “‘Parfay!’ tide wat bitide, Whiderso this levedis ride, The selve way ichil streche, Of liif no deth me no reche (339-342)” (Laskaya). It is not clear at this point if Orfeo is even planning a recovery of his lost wife or if there is just some rekindled fascination with the ladies and a remembrance of his former life. He does not talk about saving his wife, but rather it seems that there is a slightly detached fascination with where following the ladies might lead him, a fascination that he is not worried might lead to his death. I speculate that since Orfeo already feels like a dead man, a man who has lost all reasons to inhabit his former identity, the idea of actual death does not cause him any trepidation. A second death, even if it involves true death, is not a problem for him. This encounter sets Orfeo in motion, breaking the stasis of his existence and causing him to move further from his earthly home and to transition into the otherworldly realm of the fairy kingdom. A Christian reading of this transition might say that Orfeo is willfully moving away from his earthly kingdom and is going to inhabit an ethereal kingdom ruled by a god-like figure, a figure who despite Orfeo’s best attempts and his power here on earth, was able to steal his wife and spirit her away to another land. Orfeo’s ability to follow these women to the *Otherworld* is the next step in the process that was started in the Wanderer. The Wanderer could visualize and theorize about the next plane of existence, but Sir Orfeo is able to actually make the transition and travel to another plane of existence. The land of the fairy king is wondrous and when Orfeo lays eyes on the castle, he is laying

eyes on “the proude court of Paradis (376)” (Laskaya). Orfeo has made it to Paradise, which obviously is another name for the Christian Heaven. In the classical tale, Orpheus must travel to the land of the dead to retrieve his wife and must cross the river Styx as the dead would do. Here Orfeo, a man who is as one who is dead, must travel to the otherworld of Paradise to reclaim his wife and it is the unselfish, pure love that he has for her that allows him entrance to this world. It is the desire for love that is the catalyst for Orfeo’s movement through the stages of his exile. This journey works in concert with the trajectory of Julian’s movement from her community into the anchorhold, as Julian chooses to move into a form of exile in order to “seek out” her love and to discover a more intimate and personal relationship with God.

When Orfeo finds his wife, she is frozen in the state in which he last saw her. When Orfeo looks around, he is astounded “Than he gan bihold about al, And seighe liggeand within the wal Of folk that were thider y-brought And thought dede, and nare nought (387-390)” (Laskaya). All the people are frozen in the moment of their death and/or abduction. This is another example of stasis and immovability that is juxtaposed against Orfeo’s attempts to break out of the paralysis that gripped him as he languished in the forest. This highlights the fact that action is required to move closer to paradise and what we desire. Also, this action must be purposeful and directed. This is not the aimless and unfocused paddling of the Wanderer as he floats upon the surface of the water, but it is a deliberate action of a person knowingly moving toward something different.

The rest of the tale of Sir Orfeo details his return from exile and completes the outward and inward trajectory that is typical of a traditional quest narrative, and while Orfeo did not embark on this journey for the purpose of a quest or with the goal to discover or recover some object, he nevertheless manages to merge his exilic trajectory with the traditional quest trajectory and return somewhat triumphantly to his previous social position. This merging of two different trajectories gives an insight into what might be accomplished in exile and why a person might willingly seek this condition. Perhaps, by willingly entering in to this state of his own free will, Orfeo can maintain agency and then later act with purpose and intent. The Wanderer and the Wife are hapless souls who exist at the mercy of their exile, neither one able to exert any authority that might cause a change in their situation. It is possible that this lack of agency is linked to the manner in which they are exiled. By having exile forced upon them, they are stripped of the agency that might afford them the ability to change their circumstances. In contrast, since Orfeo imposed the exile upon himself, he never suffered from the stripping of his agency as the Wanderer and Wife did and thus was able to reclaim that authority when the need arose within him to change his situation. There is something in the willing surrender of agency that changes the exilic state and removes the pressure of stasis to keep the exile frozen in a state of powerlessness. It is this variation or mutation on the first state of exile discussed that sets the exile of Orfeo apart from the exile of the Wanderer and the Wife.

The exile figure that sits in parallel to Sir Orfeo is the medieval anchoress and mystic known as Julian of Norwich. Very little is known about the life of Julian prior to

her entering the church of Saint Julian in Norwich or even her life after entering the church except for her writings. In fact, even the name of Julian is uncertain as she most likely took her name from the church to which her anchorite cell was attached.

Regardless of the lack of concrete sources, there are some things that can be inferred or speculated about Julian's life due to knowledge of the area and the time in which she lived. Born in 1342, Julian "lived in a tumultuous time, the Black Death was raging in Europe. The first such plague occurred when she was only six years old." (World)¹⁸ When you consider this and the other tumultuous events that were occurring around her, Julian grew up in a world rampant with uncertainty and chaos. This chaos may have been part of what compelled Julian to a life of religious service. It has been suggested that she was probably a Benedictine nun prior to taking up her place in her cell. What is known with certainty is that when Julian was thirty years old she fell seriously ill, so ill in fact that it was presumed that she would not recover and would die. Thinking that her death was imminent:

her curate came to administer the last rites of the Catholic Church on 8 May 1373. As part of the ritual, he held a crucifix in the air above the foot of her bed. Julian reported that she was losing her sight and felt physically numb, but as she gazed on the crucifix she saw the figure of Jesus begin to bleed. Over the next several hours, she had a series of sixteen visions of Jesus Christ, which ended by the time she recovered from her illness on 13 May 1373. (Unknown, Julian of Norwich)

¹⁸ Other factors to consider as influences on the development of the young girl who would become known as Julian of Norwich are: "The road beside Saint Julian's Church was used to remove the bodies of the dead from subsequent plagues, and she probably heard the carts rumble by. The Hundred Years' War between England and France had begun in 1337, as did the papal schism in which two popes each suspected the other of being the Antichrist. Famine and cattle disease contributed to the forces that caused the Peasants' Revolt, and John Wycliff and his followers, the Lollards, were declared heretics. Some were burned and buried near Julian's church cell. She must have been aware of the suffering of the time" (World).

Julian later related that as she gazed at the bleeding figure of Christ on the crucifix, she had a series of sixteen visions of Christ. These visions were subsequently written down by Julian in what has come to be known as the Revelations of Divine Love or The Short Text. This text, written around 1395, is believed to be the first book in the English language written by a woman. It is interesting to note that in her text Julian relates that in her efforts to attain a closer union with God she had prayed to Him prior to her illness asking him for three graces.

The first was the “recollection of the passion,” to experience the crucifixion of Jesus as if she had been a witness or even as if it were happening to her personally. The second was to experience an illness so severe that everyone would think she was dying and to have it occur at age 30, the age of Christ when he was crucified. The third grace was for three “wounds,” which she characterized as “the wound of contrition, the wound of compassion, and the wound of longing with my will for God.” (World)

The events that followed this prayer would seem to indicate that Julian asked for and received exactly what she was looking for from God, that her prayers were answered.

In furtherance of her understanding of God and the vision that she received on her sick bed, Julian eventually chose to become an anchorite. An anchorite is defined as a religious recluse, from the Greek *anakhōrētēs* which means to retire or retreat from.

Taking this meaning to the extreme “medieval anchorites, as strange as it may seem to us, sought to withdraw so radically from the world that they had themselves sealed into cells for life.” (Hasenfratz)¹⁹ Referring to this enclosure as entombment is not to speak of it in

¹⁹ “Anchorites (both men and women) withdrew from the world not only to avoid physical temptation, but to engage in the kind of spiritual warfare practiced by desert saints like St. Anthony (the founder of Western monasticism), who around 285 A.D. wandered into the Egyptian desert searching for God through

a merely symbolic manner, but to understand it in the manner in which it was viewed at the time. There were specific steps taken during the rites of enclosure as it was performed by the local bishop and as Robert Hasenfratz notes in the introduction to his text, *Ancrene Wisse*, “Though there are a number of variations, the enclosure ceremony usually includes the following elements: an anchorite receives last rites, has the Office of the Dead said over her, enters her cell, and is bricked in, accompanied at each stage by various prayers” (Hasenfratz). In some cases, the anchorite had soil sprinkled over her during this ceremony as a symbolic burial after the administering of last rites. All this ritual carried with it a duality of meaning, symbolic and legal. Metaphorically speaking the ceremony was meant to symbolize the anchorite’s severing her ties with the mundane world and transitioning to a place where she could focus on spirituality and contemplation without the distractions that the “real” world provided. However, in a legal sense, these women were at least in theory considered to be dead to the world, entombed and essentially experiencing what might be called a living death. To understand this choice, it is important to understand what being an anchorite meant in Julian’s time and what constraints this placed on her. Our best understanding of what life was like for an anchorite comes from the text written sometime between 1225 and 1240 known as the *Ancrene Wisse* or *The Guide for anchoresses*.²⁰ This text can be considered a handbook to living a life as an anchorite and in her text Structure and Imagery in *Ancrene Wisse*, Janet Grayson notes “The *Ancrene Wisse* is divided

complete solitude and who attempted to tame the wickedness of the body with physical suffering and discipline.” (Hasenfratz)

²⁰ This text is a revision of a text written earlier known as the *Ancrene Riwle* or *The Rule for anchoresses*.

substantially into two parts, described by the author in his introduction as the inner Rule and outer Rule.” (Grayson 9)²¹ The outer Rule is addressed in parts 1 and 8 of the *Ancrene Wisse* and basically details how the anchoress interacts with the physical world around her, while the inner rule is discussed in parts 2-7 and focuses on the spiritual development of the anchoress. The author explains the relationship between the outer and inner Rules when he says that “the outer Rule exists only to serve the inner. The one is the handmaid and the other the lady she serves; all that is ever done in the outer Rule is meant only to serve, to perfect the heart within” (Grayson 10). This relationship is important to note because it informs the decision of the anchoresses to adopt the ascetic practices described in the *Ancrene Wisse* and handed down by the traditions of the desert fathers, men and women like St. Anthony, who withdrew from society and took up residence in the Egyptian desert in an effort to spend their lives in solitary contemplation and spiritual exploration. This eschewing of the outer world, of viewing it and its physical sensations as a distraction from the ability to fully develop one’s internal self and thus foster a closer and more intimate relationship with God, provided a great attraction for these early Medieval mystics. By controlling the exterior interactions that they were forced to deal with and the types of stimuli they were exposed to, the anchorites hoped to control the way their spirituality developed. The exterior control became a method of managing the interior development, and thus in this way we see the connection between the two different segments of the *Ancrene Wisse* and can understand the statement that

²¹ This part of the introduction is translated as: “The one governs the heart and keeps it untroubled and free from the wounds and tumors of an unhealthy conscience. This rule is always interior, guiding the heart. The other is completely external, and governs the body and its actions. It gives directions about outward behavior, about eating and drinking, dress, singing, sleep and vigil” (Grayson).

the Outer Rule is the handmaid to the lady that is the Inner Rule. Also, in this comparison, we can see the level of importance that the medieval mystics might have placed on the two spheres of their lives and while both are viewed as important, it is obvious that the development of the interior self was viewed as the more important of the two. In his text, The Secret Within, Wolfgang Riehle notes that the exterior world is viewed by the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* as the world of the senses and thus life for the anchorite “involves overcoming destructive manifestations of *affect*, in which the five external senses play a crucial part” (Riehle 44). It is in pursuit of this control of the exterior senses that the anchorites go into seclusion and cut themselves off from the world, forcing their attention inward and upward to the next spiritual plane.

This control of the senses is addressed in the second section of the *Ancrene Wisse* that is subtitled “The second part, about the custody of the heart through the five senses.”²² Part Two starts off with the admonition to “Guard your heart with every precaution, because it is the source of your life” (Millet 20). Quoting Solomon, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse*, further explains that that this analogy is not a reference to the physicality of the human body but a reference to the notion that the human spirit or soul was believed to reside in the heart. To provide the heart (soul) with appropriate protection, the pathways that lead to the heart need to be monitored and controlled. The *Ancrene Wisse* says, “The guardians of the heart are the five senses: sight and hearing, taste and smell, and feeling in every part of the body. For anyone who guards these well

²² This sub heading is taken from the text: *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for anchoresses A Translation* by Bella Millet, University of Exeter Press, 2009

follows Solomon's instruction: he takes good care of his heart and the health of his soul" (Millett 20). The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* understands the difficulty as well as the need in controlling the heart and the passions contained within. He explicitly references the beast-like nature of the heart when he says, "The heart is a very wild animal, and keeps leaping up, as St. Gregory says: Nothing is more eager to escape than the heart" (Millett 20). Understanding this view of the method in which the heart is seen to operate gives us insight into the importance of controlling it and by virtue of the influence that the senses have on the heart, the reasoning behind controlling the senses as well.

Wolfgang Riehle encapsulates this thought into the very simple statement, "Everything depends on a pure heart-a motif that recurs throughout this work" (Riehle 45). In the second part of the *Ancrene Wisse*, the author goes into great detail to describe not only the manner in which the five senses must each be controlled, but he also provides historical and Biblical examples of the ways in which the senses have been poorly supervised and controlled and thus became a conduit through which the purity of the soul was made to be forfeit. Through sight we witness the fall of Lucifer and Eve, Lucifer because through sight he believed his beauty elevated him and Eve because she was instructed to not even look at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The sense of speech fails Eve as well when she engages the serpent in conversation. Hearing is compromised by listening to lecherous gossip as well as through the unfocused and idle talk that many engage in. Smell and touch are the most sensual in nature of the five senses that are discussed with both senses being the conduit for earthly pleasures. Smell relates to the distraction of seeking out pleasant smells and the worldliness that is

associated with perfumes and excesses of the world, whereas touch is associated with sensuality and sexuality and thus is perhaps the most dangerous sense to control. Touch is, however, the sense that can have its use turned into a positive for as Christ felt his suffering in his whole body, so too are the anchorites instructed to make the body suffer visceral, physical pain to achieve a state that is closer to the experiences of Christ as he suffered for the sinners. With the pure heart as the foundation upon which all future spiritual development is based, achieving and maintaining a pure heart (and by this a pure spirit/soul) is the first step in the spiritual journey the anchorites have set themselves upon.

One of the other instructions that the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* gives to the anchorites is how to respond to any inquiries about to which of the various religious orders of the day they are attached. The author tells the anchorites to respond that they belong to the order of James. He says, “Answer: of St. James, who was God’s apostle and called God’s brother because of his great holiness. If such an answer seems strange and surprising to him, ask him what makes an order, and where can he find the religious life more clearly described and explained in the Holy Scripture than is in St. James’s canonical epistle” (Millett 3). This is a fictitious order that did not exist, but rather was created by the author to keep the anchorites separate from the conventional structures of the time. The author also goes on to explain that established orders place a lot of importance on the external look of the order, on the clothing, its color and other trappings that serve to identify them as a group. The author believes that this focuses too much energy and attention outward and away from the internal, spiritual focus that should be

the paramount concern to the Christians. He notes that, “Whenever a woman or man is living on their own, as a hermit or recluse, it does not matter much about external things as long as they do not give rise to scandal” (Millett 5). The author circumvents this distraction by creating this imaginary order. Belonging to the order of James eschews the established religious orders of the time. This intentional movement away from being willing to be conventional or traditional might be another layer of exile as the anchorites were instructed to separate themselves from the established orders and to go in a new way and on a new path. This hearkens back to one of the definitions of exile discussed in the introduction where exile is “translation from the center to the periphery, from organized space invested with meaning to a boundary where the conditions of experience are problematic” (Edwards 17). This willful separation from the establishment and denial of the identity associated with the standard practices stacks another layer of exilic meaning onto the physical exile the anchorites are already experiencing as a result of their enclosure.

Understanding all that becoming an anchorite entails gives us some insight into the level of commitment it required for Julian to become an anchorite, to see the multiple layers of separation that she placed between herself and the mundane world of physicality, to see how far she removed herself from truly inhabiting her identity in her former life and moved herself to the world of the anchorhold. As was the case with all anchorholds, the cell in which Julian was entombed was attached to the local church, which in Julian’s case was located in the center of the town of Norwich. Wolfgang Riele notes that “she did not live in total isolation as an anchorite, but in the midst of the

bustling Norwich, and since people set great store by the counsel of this wise, self-assured woman, she received a fair number of visitors” (Riehle 201). This centralized location of exile complicates what is generally understood as exile, that is, while there is a removal from the day to day participation in the activities of the village there is also an embeddedness to her exile that plants her in the center of the society she sought to abandon and move away from. This lingering liminal presence in her town creates a complication to a normalized understanding of exile: she is present, but she is simultaneously absent. I refer to this phenomenon as “present absence.” Understanding this concept will assist in seeing the layers of separation that Julian undergoes as she withdraws from the community and the worldly identity she possessed in it and moves to occupy a space that is of this world, but is focused on a more spiritual realm. It may also give us a glimpse into the why of Julian’s choice to live this lifestyle. This idea of *present absence* centers on the concept that authority or agency can be generated by the absence of physical presence. In this case the absence is precipitated by Julian’s enclosure within her anchorite cell. Her authority is created by and maintained by her withdrawal and lack of physical presence in her community. Julian is allowed a small slit in the wall of the anchorhold through which she can converse with people on the outside of the wall, but the height of the window means that there is no sight of Julian, merely her voice. Given Julian’s reputation as a wise spiritual counselor, her disembodied voice might be analogous to a surrogate for the voice of God and in that surrogacy her voice

attains an authority that would not have existed had she been conversing as a physically present woman of her time.²³

Like Sir Orfeo, Julian is a personage of authority and position in her society and, like Orfeo, it is she herself that initiates the steps that lead to her removal/withdrawal from that society. However, whereas Orfeo left his society due to his failure to protect his beloved wife and grieving for her loss, Julian left her society in a bid to get even closer to her love, God/Christ, and improve her relationship with him. This is a significant difference in the genesis of their self-imposed exiles because Orfeo's exile moved him away from the life he shared with his love, distancing himself from relationships and Julian's moves her to an increased closeness and more personal relationship with God. Were I trying to create a greater similarity between the exiles of these two, it would be necessary for Orfeo to be making the choice to go into exile because he sees it as a way to move to a space that places him closer to his beloved wife. While one of the unexpected outcomes of his exile does indeed result in Orfeo recovering his wife, it must be noted that this result was not the intent of Orfeo when he went into exile. Orfeo was not actively moving towards his love or engaging in any activity that he believed would help restore her to him. In contrast, Julian is engaged in a meaningful and conscious movement towards her desired goal. Indeed, in her writing, Julian advocates for and espouses a belief that Christians should actively seek out such a

²³ This is strictly a personal interpretation of this scenario that I base of the rhetorical concept that agency can be possessed by a disembodied voice or an object. This an extrapolation of the ideas put forth by Alfred Gell in his text, *Art and Agency*. In this anthropological study, "Gell shows how art objects embody complex intentionalities and mediate social agency" (Oxford). It is my belief that the disembodied voice can function on the same level as the art in Gell's text and can achieve an agency independent of the missing body.

personal relationship with God, a relationship that runs counter to the religious practices of the time whereby the church and its clergy functioned as the intermediary between the sinner and the God with whom they sought to communicate. It was in pursuit of this closeness that Julian chose to enter the enclosure of the anchorhold and to fully adopt the rigors and restrictions that accompanied that decision. This creates another difference between Julian and Orfeo in the form of the intention they each held when placing themselves into exile. While they both certainly execute agency when they choose their individual exiles, Orfeo is using his exile to move away from his previous situation without regard to what he is moving toward, whereas Julian has a very clear understanding of where she wants her exilic journey to take her.

The trajectory of Julian's journey is a one-way journey as she seeks to move away from the mortal world and closer to the love of God and in this trajectory Julian is able to attain a level of independence for herself. In *The Priscilla Papers*, a publication of CBE International, Linda M. Montgomery notes that,

Julian would have gained a certain amount of freedom becoming an anchoress: She could practice an independence in her religious life. The anchorhold was a spiritual retreat where Julian could pursue personal holiness. She could interpret religious ideas and practices in her own ways. (Montgomery)

This creates a scenario whereby embracing her exile, Julian, instead of constraining herself, was actually setting herself free. By giving herself the freedom to modify her religious practices as she saw fit, Julian would have been able to not only throw off the constraints of the physical aspects of her life, but to also remove the strictures that would have controlled her spiritual life had she chosen to remain outside her hold. While Julian

does not present any firmly identifying details about her life and identity, Wolfgang Riehle notes that “certain characteristics in her work do make it very likely that she belonged to the aristocracy” (Riehle 201). He points to her usage of language where she describes Christ as “courteous, Mary as “noble,” and also references the “nobility” of God. Stylistically, he notes that she uses “feudal conventions” and an allusion to “courtly” ceremony when she is elaborating on her visions (Riehle 201). Riehle concludes that “All this, and the elevated style of her work overall, is indicative of an author who herself very likely comes from the aristocracy” (Riehle 201). Viewing the constraints of enclosure as a type of freedom might give some insight into why a person such as Julian, a woman of some means and education, might choose to give up her life of privilege and enter what could be a life of lack, deprivation, and rigid control.

However, while the *Ancrene Wisse* details the parameters that ostensibly would control the life of the anchoress and her activities within the anchorhold, in a practical sense there would have been minimal ways to enforce adherence to the doctrine that the *AW* set forth once the anchorite was enclosed. In writing the *Ancrene Wisse*, the author is knowingly providing a separation between the women entering the anchorholds and the doctrines and governing bodies that controlled their spiritual lives outside of the holds by telling them to neither adhere to the rules and rigors that other orders followed nor to profess allegiance to any of the established orders of the time. In agreeing to constraint and restriction, they are gaining a large measure of freedom over a portion of their lives that until this point would have been overseen and regulated by the church authorities. In her experiences within the anchorhold is Julian merely taking this initial separation created

by the *Ancrene Wisse* to its next logical step and, if this is the case, how does this differ from the understanding of exile as it has been presented in the three previous examples detailed in this analysis? As was seen with the Wife in *The Wife's Lament*, the process of physically confining an individual can serve as the impetus for a psychological introspection, but whereas the Wife's introspections are focused on the behaviors of the individual as it interacts with the world at large, Julian's move to a higher level as she contemplates the individual's spiritual relationship with God. In the case of Julian, this freedom allows her to escape the confines of formerly restrictive thoughts and behaviors and forge a new path for herself that while seeking to operate within the same sphere of influence as her old existence, does so on a different level and with its own trajectory. It is important to remember, that while she is committed to revealing the truth of her visions, Julian is not attempting to create a new doctrine but rather to add an additional layer of interpretation and thought that can exist alongside and enhance the prevailing religious thought of the time.

Julian's reflection on her vision leads her to produce a work that is simultaneously revolutionary while still rooted in earlier Christian thought. In his book, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, Steven Fanning notes that Julian "presents a view of God that is personal and unique, brimming with optimism and couched in simple and direct language" (Fanning 125). When Julian describes how God has shown her all of creation, she says,

And in this he shewed me a little thing, the quantitie of an haselnott, lying in the palme of my hand, as me semide, and it was rounde as a balle. I looked theran

with the ey of my understanding and thought, “What may this be?” And it was answered generally thus: “It is all that is made.” (Baker 9)

Describing all of creation as a hazelnut is an imagery that shows the simple language that Julian chose to use in relating her visions. This simplicity is a break from the theological methods of her time where a large portion of the population was illiterate and if a person could read, many theological texts were written in Latin or some other foreign language. Perhaps writing in such a common style assisted Julian in avoiding censorship from local religious authorities, particularly when coupled with her stylistic choice to deny that she is attempting to teach in any manner. Wolfgang Riehle notes that Julian, “is not concerned with preaching, which was forbidden to women, but communicates only what God, her inner teacher, has shown her” (Riehle 203). Julian also adds that she is not attempting to flout the religious hierarchy of the time but rather, “willfully submyttes me tho the techynge of the haly kyrke” (Baker). This strengthens the assertion that while Julian was striking out on her own path, in order for her to pass along her “showings” and interpretations, she had to make them less threatening to the Church hierarchy. This is no small feat when you consider how far Julian moves from the dogma of her time. Fanning spoke to this when he said, “Her ideas are as stunning as those of Meister Eckhart²⁴ in their presentation of religious concepts that are unusual in the European Middle Ages” (Fanning 125). Another aspect of her “stunning” ideas is when she casts Jesus in the role

²⁴ “Meister Eckhart was a thirteenth-fourteenth century philosopher, theologian, and mystic who lived and worked in the Dominican Order. His works include the nature of God, The Trinity, the relationship of the human soul to God, and the processes inherent in these and other Christian concerns. Views on sin and redemption, Christ, and ethics are also expounded. The existing works are in the form of sermons, and fragments of a more substantial three-part work called the *Opus tripartitum*” (IEP). Accused of heresy he was tried by Pope John XXII but dies before a verdict was issued.

of our “mother.” Julian describe Christ as “oure very Moder in kind of oure furst making, and he is oure very furst Moder in grace by taking of oure kynde made” (Windeatt 189). This puts a twist on the usual aspect of the Holy trinity as it was being taught in Julian’s time. The standard teaching of this period would have seen Christ as one of the masculine aspects of the Holy Trinity which consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Mother imagery is one that is seen in Julian’s works “emphasizing the divine procreative and nurturing nature” (Fanning 125) of God. This nurturing aspect of Christ appears again in Julian’s Showings when she describes him as a gardener, with the people of the world being his crop to be presented to God, the Father. She illustrates this when she says, “He should be a gardener, delving and dyking and swetyng²⁵ and thurnyng the erth up and down, and seke the depnesse and water the plantes in time” (Baker 75). Like Adam, Christ tills and works the soil to get it to yield up its bounty to him. She says that “he shulde continue his traveyle and maker swete flodys to rynne and nobylle plentuousnesse fruyte to spryng, which he shulde bring before the lorde and serve hym therwith to his lykink” (Baker 75). This is an interesting image because it pulls together three different threads of early Biblical persons, Adam, Cain and Abel, and uniting them in Christ. In this union she uses the punishment/curse that was placed upon Adam for his disobedience in the Garden of Eden as well as both aspects of the story of Cain and Abel, however, in this telling, it is the gardener who is the chosen one who’s offering is accepted by God. Perhaps the most audacious claim

²⁵ “Digging and making dikes and sweating. Julian is alluding to the punishment of Adam, but she regards it much more positively than Genesis does” (Baker 75). Here Christ, the son of God, is paralleled with Adam, the first man and the first human son of God. Julian later goes on to say that Christ and Adam are the same man.

that Julian makes as she expounds on the meaning of her visions, is when she recounts that Jesus told her that, “Synne is behovely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele” (Baker 39). Steven Fanning, explaining how Julian interprets this statement from Christ says, “she understood this promise absolutely literally, that all of creation would be well, meaning that all humans would be saved, which she stated explicitly: “our good Lord said: every kind of thing will be well . . . you will see for yourself that every kind of thing will be well” (Fanning 125). This is an astounding claim to make in a time when people were taught that some were destined to be damned to hell. This is made even more revolutionary when you consider that “moreover, God had shown her all that was and she saw only those to be saved; she saw no hell or purgatory nor did she see anything of the Jews being condemned” (Fanning 125). When considered in the light of these areas of divergence from standard theological thought, Julian can be seen as using the unencumbered and essentially unmonitored position as an exile to forge a new path for herself and to allow her own theological thoughts and examinations to proceed without the fear of reprisal from the authorities. Whatever fear might have existed, Julian has proven herself adept at using the correct terminology and phraseology to forestall any type of reprisal, preventing this from happening and allow herself to maintain this degree of personal and spiritual freedom.

With these deviations from the standard practices of the day, it is likely that like Meister Eckhart, Julian could have just as easily been charged with heresy had there been a desire to do so. However, as I have just noted, Julian seems to have been aware of the

pitfalls that she faced and has neatly avoided them. She has been able to utilize her identity of exile and the freedoms that are part and parcel of that designation to allow herself to psychologically navigate her way to a place where she can express her own beliefs about religion and her relationship to God without fear of being silenced or punished. As a woman of means and intellect, I suggest that this may have been part of Julian's intentions all along when she first chose to enter the anchorhold, that in her case Julian might have been able to take the confinement of the cell and transform it into a place of freedom akin to the unencumbered horizons faced by the Wanderer or the endless forests inhabited by Sir Orfeo. In the juxtaposition of Julian and Sir Orfeo, we witness a different variation than that seen between the Wanderer and the Wife. Where the Wanderer and the Wife both viewed their exile with trepidation and suffering, and desired nothing more than to find an end to this condition, Orfeo and Julian both willingly entered their exile and it could also be said that they did so in order to move away from a situation of suffering. Orfeo sought to escape the suffering he experienced because of his wife's abduction, and Julian sought to transition away from the mundane world of mortal suffering and move closer to the celestial world of God's love. Yet, even Orfeo and Julian diverge within the confines of their own exiles as we see that while Orfeo becomes locked in stasis and exists in his frozen suspended state until acted upon by an outside force, Julian uses her exile to create motion and a trajectory that while carrying her away from her point of origin, is in fact delivering her to a place that she desires to be. Again, we must look at this divergence and ask how much of this difference is driven by the gender of the exile. With both Orfeo and Julian we have an

exile who has willingly entered that state of being and gender has not been an impediment to either one in making this transition. It is only after they have entered fully into their exile do we see that it represents an increased movement for one and a stagnation for the other. It is my assertion that in this instance the difference *can* be traced back to gender in that Orfeo did not achieve greater freedoms by becoming an exile, but Julian was able to utilize her new location in the transitional space between the physical world of man and the spiritual world of God to circumvent the ruling conventions of her time and exercise a freedom that she would not have been able to achieve outside of the walls of her anchorhold. As with the Wanderer and the Wife, gender determined the available placements of Orfeo and Julian, but does it account for the different states of movement and immobility that developed after their exile? Placement was crucial to the inward or outward focus the first two exiles experienced and therefore was believed to be a mitigating factor in their psychological development, but can the same be said about the stasis of Orfeo's exile compared to the energy of Julian's? If one considers the inherent freedoms that Orfeo would have possessed in his pre-exilic life and compare that to the freedoms that Julian might have enjoyed, I believe that we can again find that gender become a factor because where Orfeo had authority and could presumably do as he pleased, the female gender of Julian would have prevented her from operating in the same manner. It is only through the freedom that exile and symbolic "death" afforded her that she could pursue her religious meditations in as unencumbered a manner as she did. Even though both Julian and Orfeo entered exile of their own free will, gender made it a necessary choice (if religious ecstasy and visions can give you a

choice) for Julian if she hoped to shed the shackles of her former identity and be true to her higher self.

CHAPTER IV

MARGERY KEMPE

Now we arrive at Margery Kempe, a figure that muddies the waters in what we have come to expect from both male and female exile and straddles the exilic modes and methods of both genders. Margery Kempe was an English mystic who was born in Bishop's Lynn, Norfolk, England around the year 1373 and our knowledge of her comes primarily from one text, her autobiography, *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Wolfgang Riehle says, "Her well-known only work, *The Book of Margery Kempe* is remarkable in many ways, and controversial; until the 1930's it was known only through contemplative excerpts printed by Wynkyn de Worde" (Riehle 246). Even though it was the first known autobiographical work written in English, "for more than 400 years after her death Margery had little influence on the study of mysticism because her *Book* was lost not long after its composition" (Fanning 126). Because of these surviving fragments, the unknown details of Margery's life were filled in by supposition and hypothesis. In fact, "Margery was believed to have been an anchoress, like Julian, in Bishops Lynn," and "Evelyn Underhill assigned her to the latter thirteenth century" (Fanning 126). All of this changed in 1934 when a complete copy of Margery's manuscript was discovered by medieval scholar, Hope Emily Allen, in the home of the Butler Bowden family. With the emergence of this full text, the truth about Margery finally surfaced and we learned that Margery "had been no thirteenth century recluse but lived a century later and was a

businesswoman, a wife, a mother of fourteen children and was fully-involved in the world” (Fanning 126). This distinction becomes important as we try to understand how she can be viewed as an exile while at the same time be very much a part of her contemporary society and participating in the activities that were occurring around her. Where all of our previous examples entered or were placed in a state that truly was separated from their previous existence, Margery remains more or less fully immersed in the world at large and it is from this position of oddity that we discuss how Margery fits in with or complicates our understanding of what it meant to be a woman in the Medieval era, to deal with the physical conditions of exile, and also how the psychological ramifications of those physical conditions (or potential lack of them in Margery’s case) affected her writings.

Unlike most autobiographies, Margery’s book does not begin with her birth and in fact reveals very few details about her childhood. Instead, “The narrative of Kempe’s *Book* begins just after her marriage, and relates the experience of her difficult first pregnancy” (Unknown, Margery Kempe). Fanning notes that “Her first pregnancy was a difficult one, and she was constantly ill, becoming obsessed with an unconfessed sin. After giving birth, Margery became demented” (Fanning 127). In Margery’s own words she describes the situation thusly:

This creature went out of her mind and was wonderfully vexed and labored with spirits for half a year, eight weeks and some odd days. And in this time she saw, as she thought, devils open up their mouths, all inflamed with burning flames of fire as if they should have swallowed her in, sometimes menacing her, sometimes threatening her, sometimes pulling her and hailing her both night and day of the foresaid time. (Kempe 7)

Like Julian, Margery relates that she has had a serious illness from which she was not expected to recover and had the priests called in to hear her confession. Unlike Julian, however, Margery does not have her religious epiphany when the priest is present, instead he become impatient with her and begins to chastise her for her unwillingness to fully confess her sins and then he departs. At this point Margery tells us that her condition worsens as she feels that she is being tormented by devils and she becomes a danger to herself. She says, “She would have killed herself many a time because of her stirrings and been damned with them to hell . . . And also she tore the skin on her body against her with her nails . . . and worse she would have done, save she was bond and kept by strength both day and night” (Kempe 7). It is after the many days of this dementia, that Margery claims to have had her vision where Christ spoke to her and said, “Daughter, why have you forsaken me, and I forsook never you” (Kempe 8)? At this point Margery recounts a miraculous physical recovery and an immediate clearing of her mind of the devils with whom she had been wrestling. Fanning notes, “Margery was instantly cured of her madness and resumed her normal life in the household, but she was a changed woman. She had learned that although people think that Christ “is far away from them . . . in truth he is very near indeed with his merciful grace” (Fanning 127). Unlike Julian, who at this point turned completely towards religious thought and contemplation of the visions that she had been shown, Margery returns to what might be seen as “life as normal.” Indeed, she seems to have fully immersed herself in the commercial aspect of her life. Margery, herself, gives us the details of how she behaved after her vision of Christ returned her to health. She tells us that she felt bound to God

but “Nevertheless, she would not leave her pride nor her pompous array that she had used before that time,” and she wore clothing that she would be “conspicuous to men’s sight and she the more worshipped” (Kempe 8). She continues to tell us that when her husband spoke to her of her pride, she would rebuke him and boast of her stature in the community, being filled with envy if anyone should be dressed as well as she was dressed. “All of her desire was to be worshipped by the people. She would not beware anyone’s chastising, nor be content with the goods that God had sent her...but ever desired more and more” (Kempe 8). With this admission, it is fairly easy to see why some scholars might regard Margery with a certain amount of skepticism when she makes the turn and begins to journey down the path of the mystic. Margery has confessed to us her interest in being worshipped or being a woman of renown. Wolfgang Riehle observes that, “only when economic problems and conflicts in society begin to emerge does her definitive religious conversion occur” (Riehle 247). In his text, English Mystics of the Middle Ages, Barry Windeatt confirms this idea, saying that only “after early failures as a businesswoman, Margery Kempe saw further visions and felt herself summoned to a spiritual life” (Windeatt 227). Does Margery’s return to a “normal life” and attempts at satisfying her “prideful” desires through commercial ventures even after having had a mystic experience in anyway undermine the believability in the veracity of her later actions as a mystic? Might a person be justified in viewing Margery’s sudden conversion as a calculated means of achieving the notoriety and fame that she admittedly sought but was unable to achieve through her commercial aspects? In her text, English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith, Marion Glasscoe notes, “the nature of Margery’s

Kempe's religious experience gave rise to controversy during her lifetime and continues to provoke modern readers. The source of the difficulty appears to be in the style of the woman herself, in the way she perceived, reacted to and to some extent created the events of her life" (Glasscoe 268). To potentially answer these questions, we must look at not only Margery's choices and the motivations behind those choices, but also how the choices themselves manifested in her life, some of which led her to be driven out of various communities and groups as well as divorced from her previous identity of wife and mother.

After the failure of multiple business ventures Margery (now around the age of forty) claims to have had another mystical experience where she is overcome by the sound of celestial music. "She heard a sound of melody so sweet and delectable, she thought, as if she might be in paradise. And therewith she started out of her bed and said, "Alas, that ever I did sin; it is full merry in heaven" (Kempe 10). Riehle notes that in addition to the music "she also heard "the kind of noise a pair of bellows makes that seemed to blow directly into my ear, "which she understood as the sound of the Holy Spirit" (Fanning 127). These auditory experiences combined with the failures in her business life were enough to set Margery down the path that would ultimately lead her to a point that allows us to consider her in our discussion of exiles, however Margery does not fit neatly into any of the categories that we have previously discussed as being indicative of an exilic experience. She represents a moving target of sorts, exhibiting traits that characterize aspects of female exile in addition to crossing the gender divide and exhibiting traits that are typically associated with males.

As a representative of female exile, one of the first traits we must look at is Margery's desire to separate from her husband and lead a celibate life. In the case of the Wife in *The Wife's Lament*, she had celibacy forced upon her by her isolation within the earth cave and Julian was likewise physically isolated away from her husband although this was a choice that she entered willingly. For Margery, the choice to be celibate is also a conscious choice, however, unlike Julian, Margery still interacted with her husband and family while practicing her celibacy. In fact, Margery "persuaded her husband to join her in a mutual vow of chastity" (Windeatt 227). Achieving this took a lot of negotiations on the part of Margery, for when she tells her husband, "I pray you, suffer me to make a vow of chastity in whatever bishop's hand that God will" (Kempe 19), her husband refuses this request and tells her that as her husband, "I will not grant you, for now may I use you without deadly sin and then might I not so" (Kempe 19). After some time has passed, the husband grants the request with conditions, one of which was that she pay off his debts to which Margery promptly agrees. This seems a bit mercenary when you consider that Margery is basically buying her chastity from her husband²⁶ and is then using this agreed upon vow of chastity to separate herself from and elevate herself above the other women she might encounter. Steven Fanning notes that at this point Margery indicates that "on divine instructions she began wearing the white clothing of nuns, symbolizing virginity. This not only drew the scorn of those who knew her, but it also smacked of heresy" (Fanning 128). So in this stage of separation, by becoming celibate Margery gains

²⁶ This hearkens back to the observation that both Riehle and Windeatt made about Margery's affinity for the commercial world. Riehle is, however, more forgiving of this affinity when says say because of Lynn's status as a busy trading town, "it is therefore hardly surprising that we find in this region a paradoxical juxtaposition of down-to-earth-worldly materialism and desire for spiritual experience." (Riehle 247)

(perhaps unintentionally) an additional layer of movement towards exile. It is also of interest to note that Margery's extreme desire for a celibate marriage is accompanied by a story and psychology that is seemingly overly occupied with sex. Margery relates to us a story of a man (other than her husband) who wanted to have sex with her, and after some contemplation Margery goes to him on two occasions only to be rebuffed on the first occasion and totally refused on the second. Margery tells us that this caused her great distress and "she went away all shamed and confused within herself, seeing his stableness and her own unstableness" (Kempe 13). On the subject of sex in Margery's text, Wolfgang Riehle says, "Sexuality predominates her sins, and she never succeeded in integrating it into her personality in a way that could satisfy her natural instinct" (Riehle 247). Here, Riehle seems to be saying that Margery was unable to come to terms with her sexual desires and thus viewed them as sinful and eventually began to describe these thoughts as being either temptations from the devil or tests from God.²⁷

Perhaps because of these seemingly overwhelming sexual desires, Margery felt compelled to overcompensate in her response to these uncontrollable thoughts and her psychological pendulum swung all the way from sex to celibacy. However, even when Margery has achieved her celibate life and is allowed to wear the white clothing of a nun to symbolize this, there is still the ascription of sexual impropriety to her person. On one of Margery's pilgrimages to the Holy Land, she relates that the company she is traveling with "said they would take away her maiden from her so that she should be no strumpet in her company" (Kempe 46). There is no more detail about this encounter that lets us

²⁷ Margery also relates the story of a dream in which she is being chased by disembodied phalluses.

know what exactly Margery was doing that might cause others to believe that merely being in Margery company might cause her maid to be “prostituted” but one must believe that she was doing something to cause this reaction. This incident shows us that there is something in Margery’s behavior that is off-putting to her compatriots and leads to another isolation when her servant is taken from her. This demonstrates to us that Margery’s performance of celibacy causes her to be shunned by those around her and thus becomes one of the mechanisms by which Margery is able to be cast in the role of exile.

A second area in which Margery diverges from the normal gender conventions of exile is when she goes on pilgrimage without the company of her husband or another male companion. While not completely unheard of, it was certainly a rare enough to elicit second glances and negative judgment from her fellow travelers. Wolfgang Riehle confirms that “A few months after relinquishing conjugal intimacy, she resolved to embark on the longed-for pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which was highly unusual for a woman without a male companion at the time” (Riehle 250). As we noted earlier, Orfeo casts himself into exile and it was not seen as unusual for him to wander the wilderness alone, nor was it the case with the Wanderer that there was a gendered inhibition to the state that he found himself in. There is something in the case of Margery Kempe that causes not only the unusual situation to occur, but that also accounts for the reaction of her community to this decision. Perhaps the oddity in this scenario predisposed the companions on Margery’s pilgrimage to dislike her, but regardless of the source of the animosity, Margery encounters problems with her companions on virtually every journey

she took. On the first pilgrimage, Margery tells us that though she had eaten no meat in the four previous years “now on account of [her] journey [her] confessor directed her firmly under obedience that [she] should both eat meat and drink wine” (Skinner 96). Despite these instructions, Margery eventually stops eating meat with her companions and this causes strife in the group. She tells us that, “soon after, through the moving of some of her company, her confessor was displeased because she ate not meat, and so was much of all the company” (Kempe 45). So, soon into her journey, Margery has disobeyed her confessor and started to create friction between herself and her fellow pilgrims.²⁸ This is a pattern we see emerging quite often in the story Margery relates to us. She is constantly at odds with her fellow travelers causing them to want to break ties and not associate with her. They make Margery sit at the end of the dining table and tell her not to speak to anyone if she wants to remain in their company, but even this causes strife when a “worthy doctor” is invited to dine with the group. During this dinner Margery sits in her assigned place and does not speak; when the doctor inquires about her, the other pilgrims complain about Margery and ask him to intervene to compel her to conform. The doctor refuses, saying “I will not make her eat meat while she may abstain herself and be better disposed to love our Lord . . . As for her speaking, I will ask her to cease until she come where men will hear her with better will than you do” (Kempe 47). Being chastised thusly by the doctor, her company was “wroth and in great anger. They gave her over to the legate and said utterly they would no more meddle with her” (Kempe

²⁸ I speculate that eating meat and drinking wine was part of the social aspect of the pilgrimage experience and was part of the expected behaviors in order to build comradery in the group. By disrupting this Margery, already a source of oddity for traveling alone, threatens the routine and experience of all the travelers.

47). Katharina Wilson notes in her book, Medieval Women Writers, that Margery's behavior was an embarrassment to her "traveling companions to the extent that on several occasions she was threatened and/or abandoned. But they were recognized by several spiritual counselors with whom she discussed them as valid signs of God's working in and through her" (Wilson 299). This serves to create a dual-layered sense of irritation with Margery by her companions, because not only is Margery's behavior bothersome to the group, but they must watch as some spiritual authorities take her side, support her actions, and then castigates the companions for their actions towards Margery and their disbelief in her authenticity. "However, there was much more that attracted almost instant hostility towards her. She was very outspoken, quick to scold and reprimand those whom she detected sinning, especially the swearing of crude oaths" (Fanning 128). Margery was not content to confine her criticisms merely to members of the laity. In fact, Katharina Wilson observes, "She was not afraid to criticize the lack of such faith wherever she found it, even in the immediate household of an archbishop" (Wilson 298). Because of this behavior, Margery was often called before the religious authorities, accused of being a Lollard²⁹ and threatened to be charged with heresy. However, "the several questionings she underwent preliminary to such a trial . . . confirmed her orthodoxy in the minds of her questioners" (Wilson 299). This indicates to me that Margery has identified the current religious state of her surroundings and has made the

²⁹ Lollardy has been called 'England's first heresy'. It was never an organized movement in the sense of a modern religious or secular organization. There was no 'Head Lollard' or organizational hierarchy of Lollards. Rather, Lollards were simply people tied together by a set of beliefs. Those beliefs varied in focus and intensity from one person to the next, so it is a mistake to think of Lollards as having unified beliefs or set of principals. (Ross)

conscious choice to forge a path that not only willfully sets her apart from this community, but also encourage the members of this community to cast her out, to exile her from their company.

The last of Margery's traits that contributed to her becoming an exile from her community that we will address is her performance of affective piety.³⁰ Affective piety in and of itself was not that unusual a practice for the mystics of this time, but Margery takes this practice to a much higher level than her contemporaries. Julian of Norwich can also be seen as a mystic who performs a type of affective piety. She had said, after having a vision of Christ's suffering:

me thought I woulde have ben that tyme with Magdaleyne and with other that were Christus lovers that I might have seen bodilie the passion that our Lord suffered for me, that I might have suffered with him as other that loved him. And therefore, I desired a bodily sight wher in I might have more knowledge of the bodily paynes of our Savior . . . For I would have be one of them and suffered with them. (Baker 5)

Therefore, although Julian does not appear to perform her piety with a grandiosity, it was nonetheless a part of her spiritual make up. Indeed, Denise Baker, in her text, Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book, observes that "this concentration on the suffering of Christ's humanity situates Julian of Norwich within the culture of affective

³⁰ **Affective piety** is most commonly described as a style of highly emotional devotion to the humanity of Jesus, particularly in his infancy and his death, and to the joys and sorrows of the Virgin Mary. This practice of prayer, reading, and meditation was often cultivated through concentration on vivid images of scenes from the Bible, Saints' Lives, and other religious material. These images could be either conjured up in people's minds when they read or heard poetry and other pieces of religious literature, or they could gaze on manuscript illuminations and other pieces of art as they prayed and meditated on the scenes depicted. In either case, this style of affective meditation asked the "viewer" to engage with the scene as if she or he were physically present and to stir up feelings of love, fear, grief, and/or repentance for sin (Affective Piety)

spirituality that pervaded popular religious life during the late Middle Ages” (D. Baker 15). One might say that Julian practiced her affective piety in a subtle and reserved manner that was not solely focused inwardly for “although Julian prays for five gifts, the first two, the vision and the illness are outward manifestations” (D. Baker 21). In contrast to this reserved form of practice, Margery practiced her affective piety in a loud, bombastic and almost theatrical manner designed (perhaps) as much to draw attention to herself as it is designed to express her spiritual experience. For Margery, the chief manifestation of her affective piety was her tears. Margery cries a lot, so much so that it becomes an irritation to those around her, creating yet another layer of separation between Margery and her community. Steven Fanning observes, “Weeping in compunction for one’s sins or in recalling the wounds suffered by Jesus on behalf of all humanity was a common phenomenon among mystics, but Margery took weeping to a new decibel level” (Fanning 128). Margery tells that it was when she was on a pilgrimage to the Holy land and had visited the tomb of the Holy Sepulchre, “the foresaid creature wept and sobbed so plenteously as though she had seen our Lord with her bodily eye suffering his Passion at that time” (Kempe 51). Wilson tells us that Margery had “fits of uncontrolled weeping [that] began with her initial conversion experience, but what she calls her “cryings” began as a regular and continuing phenomenon after her visit to Rome” (Wilson 299). As has been stated, Margery cried a lot and often with her cryings continuing “with varying intensity-once she had fourteen in a single day-for many years, perhaps to the end of her life, and brought her a great deal of notoriety” (Wilson 299). Margery tell us that on one pilgrimage, as she approached Calvary, not

only did she cry but she writhed on the ground “wallowed and twisting with her body, spreading her arms abroad and cried out with a voice as though her heart should burst asunder” (Kempe 51). Another aspect of Margery’s extreme manifestations of piety is that she apparently had no control over it. “She admitted, ‘I cried out with an amazing great roar that could be heard a long way off. I simply could not prevent myself from doing so” (Fanning 128). One can imagine the reaction to such displays might indeed be annoyance and aversion and this was mostly the case with Margery. In fact, “one Franciscan preacher in Lynn ban[ned] her from his sermons while the entire town turned against her and insisted she take up residence somewhere else” (Fanning 128). There were, however, a few exceptions to this aversion to Margery’s expression of her piety. To some her tears were “a long-recognized sign of grace” (Glasscoe 278). Wolfgang Riehle notes that “Tears are frequently mentioned in the Bible,” and “because they are a gift of grace Kempe has to contradict the [authorities] when they require her to end her weeping” (Riehle 257). Margery’s expression of affective piety caused her to alienate many people, any number of whom attempted to drive from their company or compel her to leave “willingly” of her own volition. In this manner, Margery’s manifestation of her piety is a tool of helping to create her exile and is a tool wielded both by Margery herself as well as those she encounters.

This analysis shows us that despite our best attempts to apply a single or even single-gendered set of attributes to Margery Kempe, she simply cannot be confined in such a manner. Indeed, it seems as if her life was an exercise in disrupting the status quo and challenging the prevailing conventions of her time. Her autobiography “often recalls

the hagiographic tradition” (Riehle 268), but unlike a true hagiography, Margery’s text was dictated, reviewed, and funded by Margery herself. Even though she fancies herself to be on a religious parallel with Julian, Margery does not withdraw from the world or forego its stimulation to become closer to God. Rather, she situates herself in the centers of activity and interacts with all the people of renown that she can manage to meet. This proximity to center become more intriguing when one considers the myriad ways in which Margery attempted to elevate, separate, and distance herself from others, whether through her own movements or through the way her actions caused others to view her. It is not a secret that Margery admired the female saints, and that “she speaks of sainthood and does not contradict a man who asks her to pray for him when she is a saint in heaven” (Riehle 268). Also, although not a Lollard herself, “it is not surprising that she attracted hostile attention in the ethos of controversy generated by the fervently pious and articulate Lollards” (Glasscoe 282). Marion Glasscoe describes Margery as “both very like and unlike” the other mystics of her time and Steven Fanning observes that “even in a world well-acquainted with anchoresses and hermits her behavior was certainly aberrant, irritating, and lacking in subtlety” (Fanning 128). When all this is considered it would be difficult to believe that any of this was accidental and that Margery was a victim of circumstances beyond her control. Instead, I believe that Margery was to a great extent manipulating her circumstances and this points to a carefully crafted identity that Margery sought to live into.

As has been noted, Margery is a moving target that cannot be easily pinned down to a single set of identifying features. Instead, she wanders pilgrim-like across a

multitude of identities, engaging more fully with some while brushing only causally against others. It seems to me that Margery has set her trajectory of exile to encompass both the outward and inward journey. While staying fully immersed in society, she seeks the “punishment” of exclusion. Margery seeks to move from the mainstream of society to its religious periphery, a place where she can be recognized as both a mystic and one with a very personal relationship with God. Her actions and behaviors displace her from: her marriage (in a sexual sense), her community of origin, her community of pilgrims, and virtually every other community or group that she seeks to interact with. I think that this displacement is part of a plan that Margery has for herself and for the image of herself that will exist after she is dead. I would suggest that in an odd way by moving from the mainstream to an outsider status, Margery uses this positioning to gain a modicum of freedom from the constraints that the religious standards of the time placed upon her. Like Julian, Margery attains the freedom to practice her religion in a manner that is uniquely created for her alone. Through this innovative practice of her religion Margery attempts to become the ultimate insider, leveraging her outsider status into a position that places her even closer to God, who was considered the center of all things, thus making Margery the penultimate insider.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Through this examination, we have shown that in the Middle Ages both males and females can be seen to operate within the construct we know as exile. Both genders were subject to the punishment but manifested their experiences of exile in a specific way, often seeing these experiences aligning with what might have been culturally expected given the specific gender of the exile being discussed. Orfeo and the Wanderer, as examples of male exile, understood their exile in the terms of it aligning with a masculine and gendered expectation of being cast out and set adrift, or being turned out into the no-man's land of the untamed wilderness. Julian and the Wife also experienced a gender-appropriate expression of exile in that they both found themselves confined and constrained (at least physically), and their movement circumscribed by barriers erected to keep them compassed to a single location. Our other female exile, Margery Kempe, however does not fully situate herself within either definition of exile, neither fully inhabiting the female guise of exile, nor fully abandoning it in favor of its masculine counterpart. Margery seems to exhibit the "punishment" of being driven out while at the same time she keeps herself constrained and controlled by the ascetic restrictions she adopts as a method of showing contrition. However, even as an outlier, it is my supposition that Margery's experience of the masculine aspect of exile was somewhat ameliorated by the fact that she was a woman. For when Margery was on pilgrimage and

was initially cast out of the group, she recounts that one man intervenes on her behalf. She tells us that, “He asked me to apologize to everyone and tell them that I would behave myself with extra care if only they would let me travel with them” (Skinner 97). It seems unlikely that had Margery been a man, such a gesture of compassion, would have been extended to him in the same circumstances.

However, while gender may have been the defining role in the type of exile assigned to each, I believe that it was the physical placement of the exile and the transition to and within that space that exerted the most influence on how the psychology of the exile developed and was demonstrated. Something happens in the space between here and there that catalyzes an evolution within the exile and prepares them for the transformation that occurs when they inhabit their exilic states. N. K. Yoshikawa notes that Margery had “what anthropologists define as a liminal experience, one that separates her from her society, takes her to the margin of a new reality, and then returns her anew” (Yoshikawa). Likewise, the anchorite cell of Julian can be considered such a space as detailed by Liz H. McAvoy when she tells us, “her cell would be as a tomb, the marginalized of the living dead, and often placed in the liminal location of a churchyard” (McAvoy 71). For Orfeo, there are two such spaces at work, both the wilderness of the forest and the kingdom of the fairies. Even within the kingdom of the fairies, D. Vance Smith in his article *Chaucer as an English Writer* observes, the “liminality of the people in Sir Orfeo, who are ‘thought dede, and nare nought’” (Smith 106). Finally, the Wanderer and the Wife both experience this transitional inbetween-ness by inhabiting places that can be said to sit astride boundaries. The Wife is in a place that is neither

settled nor completely wild and the open expanse of the sea that the Wanderer floats upon is the archetypal image of a transitional space. It is through this universally experienced hinterland, this state of unfettering, that our exiles must all travel to achieve the changes that result in their psychological transformations. These changes exemplify the ultimate expression of the power of their placement and allows the exile to achieve awareness and growth that would have been difficult if not impossible in their previous station.

This brings us back to the power and influence of gender in either initiating or facilitating these transformations, and understanding how significant of a factor gender has become. Gender obviously plays a role in the methods and locations of the exiles that we have discussed, supporting the assertion that there is a gendered component to exile in its basic physical manifestation. There is an essential and inherent difference in the way that the instances of exile would have been experienced by men and women as evidenced by the comparisons made in this analysis. However, when we transition to a discussion of the psychological ramifications of exile, the distinctions seem to become less distinct. In this discussion, placement seems to be the preeminent factor in how the mental changes occur. The placement of Orfeo and the Wanderer into open spaces influences their experience by allowing them to feel the possibility of movement and potential return to their place of origin, albeit in a changed manner. For Julian and the Wife, the circumscription of their movement creates a psychological state where neither of the women contemplate a trajectory that returns them to their original station. Rather, both seem to have accepted their voyage through this space of metamorphosis as a strictly one-way movement. Margery's ability to move in her exile makes her the perfect bridge

between our other examples. She can experience her unfettering on dual levels, mirroring the experiences of the other exiles we have discussed. Like the men, Margery still returns over and over to her society, highlighting a constant loop of an out-and-back trajectory in the physical realm, and like the women, she envisions a movement that sees her psychologically transplanted to a new space where the rules of the old existence no longer apply. Margery becomes key in this comparison because as a person who inhabits both spaces of exile and, through this participation, is able to exhibit both types of reactions to exile; she illustrates that the true experience of exile is dictated more by placement than by gender.

As I have stated, it is true that there is a gendered component to exile, but that component seems to be situated more in the societal norms of the time and in what would have been acceptable placement, than in the actual experience of exile itself. The true experience of exile seems to be derived from the area of placement regardless of gender. If this is true, this opens the exploration of exile along a path that breaks with the tradition of examining it in terms of the historical male/female binary. Working outside this binary will allow us to look at the experience of exile in and of itself, approaching each exiled individual and his/her response as unique and conditional to the person and the placement that is occurring. I believe that by shifting the paradigm away from this gendered binary to a more individualized focus will allow us to analyze the condition of exile and its effects in a purer way that is not influenced by the preconceived notions that the gendered view imposes. In this way we can seek to understand how the mechanisms

of exile function and interact both with themselves and within the individual to create the total experience we call exile.

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